

Adoption Network Cleveland
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House Children and Human Services Committee
March 7, 2025

**Adoption Network Cleveland's Proponent Testimony on House Bill 7 - To Extend Categorical Eligibility
for Publicly Funded Child Care to Foster and Kinship Care**

Chair White, Chair Ray, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding publicly funded childcare for children in foster and long-term kinship care. We are in full support of this legislation.

Adoption Network Cleveland: The Ohio Family Connection is a forward-thinking nonprofit dedicated to meeting essential needs for information, advocacy, education, and support within the adoption community. Serving adoptees, birth parents, adoptive, kinship, and foster families, as well as youth currently or formerly in foster care, siblings, and related professionals, we provide programs and resources that make a difference. Our innovative programs are designed to empower and support these individuals, filling gaps that might otherwise go unmet.

House Bill 7 is critical to ensuring that children in the child welfare system have access to stable, high-quality childcare while relieving an overwhelming financial burden for caregivers.

Childcare is one of the most significant costs families face, often exceeding \$1,000 per month per child, depending on their age. For many working parents, this expense absorbs such a large portion of their income that fostering becomes financially unfeasible. Without childcare assistance, many willing and capable foster and kinship caregivers are forced to turn away children simply because they cannot afford the cost—on top of additional expenses for housing, food, clothing, and medical needs.

This financial strain is especially concerning because children who have experienced trauma need a safe, stable, and calm environment to heal. The adults caring for them must be in a sound position—mentally, emotionally, and financially—so they can focus on helping the children catch up developmentally, medically, behaviorally, and socially. The high cost of childcare creates unnecessary stress for caregivers, making it harder for them to provide the secure, nurturing home these children desperately need.

Though we want to prioritize placing children with kin whenever possible to maintain family bonds and continuity, many grandparents and other kinship caregivers simply cannot afford childcare costs, forcing them to say no—even when they would otherwise be the best placement option for the child. House Bill 7 would remove this financial barrier, allowing more children to remain with family members who love and know them best.

By passing House Bill 7, we can provide much-needed support to foster and kinship families, ensuring that children who have already experienced trauma are placed in homes where they can heal and thrive. We urge you to support this bill and advocate for its swift passage. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to strengthening support for vulnerable children and their caregivers. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Ty Cliffl
Director of Programs
Adoption Network Cleveland