

**House Children and Human Services Committee  
Proponent Testimony, House Bill 7**

**Tony Baker**

**March 11, 2025**

Thank you Chair Andrea White and members of the Children and Human Services Committee for holding a 2<sup>nd</sup> hearing on House Bill Number 7. I am a proponent of House Bill 7 and support this bill's passage through your committee.

My name is Tony Baker, and I am currently a foster parent with my partner. We proudly host a placement of two 6-year-old twin brothers. They arrived in our home on a Wednesday evening last summer, and with both of us working, we needed a babysitter immediately on Thursday. We also utilized a friend as a babysitter again on Friday who we paid out of pocket.

We were fortunate that the YWCA had space for two 5-year-olds in their preschool program the following Monday – with of course the first two week's payment upfront. The first partial stipend payment from the agency arrived 14 days later after we paid for three full weeks of childcare.

Now, we only knew that the YWCA had space for kids because throughout the spring, our agency called multiple times a week for possible placements for infants. As we said yes, we started touring nearby childcare facilities to learn about their program and cost. One call for a newborn baby happened at 7pm as we walked on a trail at a park. We were told that if we said yes and were selected, we may need to pick up the newborn from the hospital that evening. For foster parents, we have hours, maybe days, notice to welcome a child and set up child-care or a new arrangement at our job.

I say this to paint a picture of the short notice we receive, the immediate cost we endure, and the delay in receiving the daily stipend. We are not retirees waiting for a call to fill a bed. We are trying to provide a safe place to live and grow. We are not trying to make a living from foster care. We are trying to break generational cycles of abuse.

This bill would help foster parents like us who work and do not qualify on our own for public assistance for childcare. This bill would also recruit and retain additional foster care parents, potentially more adults in the prime years of life. Additionally, this bill would help Ohio recruit and retain adults to be foster or kinship parents who aren't able to spend from their own pocket for daycare.

The financial numbers are easy to understand that childcare costs quickly and easily outpace the daily stipend a foster family may receive. Others can point out those specifics. Some may argue that foster families should utilize the child tax credit to offset daycare

costs. However, short-term placements do not qualify for the federal child tax credit. Or there can be other complications such as county child service policies that hinder a foster parent's ability to file for the tax credit.

I'd also like to thank Chair White and Rep. Sharon Ray's bill for including a licensed school child program in the list of publicly funded childcare options. With a previous placement, we utilized an after-school program hosted in the Westerville school district, where we live. That was the right option for that placement, while full-day daycare was the right option for the current placement.

Thank you again for your time. Passage into law of House Bill 7 will immediately help current foster parents. It will help current foster children. And it will help recruit and retain future foster parents. Please support this bill. Thank you.