

Opponent Testimony on Ohio House Bill 262
Submitted by Lis Regula, Advocacy Associate, Men Having Babies
Ohio House Government Oversight Committee
[Insert Date]

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony on House Bill 262. My name is Lis Regula, and I serve as Advocacy Associate at *Men Having Babies*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly gay men, build families through ethical surrogacy and other family-forming options. I am also an Ohio resident, a biologist, and a proud father.

While on the surface HB 262 may appear benign—simply designating the weeks between Mother’s Day and Father’s Day as “Natural Family Month”—its language and implications carry harmful weight. This resolution is not merely symbolic. It reinforces a narrowly defined and exclusionary vision of what constitutes a “real” family—one based solely on heterosexual, biological reproduction.

I stand before you as someone who is both a father and a professional in the fertility field. My employer has worked for over a decade to reduce barriers to infertility care, especially third-party reproduction and surrogacy. While our focus is on the LGBTQ+ community, because of the healthcare disparities that present added barriers to our community, the IVF mandates that we have helped to pass in New Jersey and California, and the surrogacy bills that we have helped to pass in New York and Michigan have benefitted more straight families than LGBTQ+ families. No family that we have helped is any less natural, loving, or real than any other. Yet this bill sends a clear message: that families like these- families formed through surrogacy, adoption, IVF, or queer partnerships- are unnatural and unworthy of recognition.

Additionally, the timing and phrasing of this month-long recognition leaves behind families like my own family of origin and many other families of straight parents. Children who have lost a parent through no fault of their own- whether that is death or divorce- are already faced with added emotional struggles at Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, as are children being raised by family members, friends, or the foster care system. Children of military families are disproportionately harmed by this when a parent is lost in service, as is the case with my friend, Nicole, whose granddaughter lost her father in a training accident. This bill also fosters the type of secrecy surrounding donor gamete conception that we have heard harms donor-conceived individuals, and that they would like to see become part of our cultural memory instead of an ongoing practice.

Words matter. Legislative designations like this become political tools that can justify further restrictions. In a state that has already advanced bills targeting gender-affirming care, inclusive education, and reproductive freedom, HB 262 is not occurring in a vacuum. It is part of a larger

pattern of erasure- one that devalues LGBTQ+ families, single parents, blended families, and others who don't fit a narrow mold. Research shows that children from families in the LGBTQ+ community fare as well or better than their peers raised in households that fit the definition of "natural family" put forth in this bill.

What this resolution truly does is weaponize nostalgia. It idealizes a mythologized version of family that never included many of us, and never served all of us. And while it may seem ceremonial, the impact is very real. When the state chooses to elevate only one kind of family officially, it implicitly delegitimizes every other.

Our organization, Men Having Babies, works with parents who want nothing more than to raise children in safety and love. We help people navigate an often expensive, complex, and emotionally taxing journey to parenthood, only to now face stigma from their government. If the Ohio legislature is genuinely concerned about addressing the needs of Ohioans and our state, it would work to reduce barriers to family-building instead of adding more. We already know that approximately two-thirds of employees are willing to change jobs to access family-building benefits. Ohio's lower rate of coverage for these benefits puts us at a disadvantage in attracting the best and brightest. It poses an especially tough challenge for our rural communities, which often cannot access specialized medical care like this without a long drive, time off work, and fewer choices of accessible providers.

HB 262 is exclusionary and unnecessary. It does nothing to support actual families—natural, chosen, blended, or otherwise. It does not provide childcare, expand access to fertility care, or protect parental rights. It's performative. And worse, it marginalizes thousands of Ohio families who are already raising the next generation with integrity, compassion, and resilience.

I urge you to consider the broader impact of this bill. Celebrating family should mean celebrating *all* families, not just one's own. Not just the ones that fit a narrow ideological frame.

Please vote no on HB 262.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.