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H.B. 96 Senate Finance Committee Testimony  
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Chair Cirino, Vice-Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Paula Hicks-Judson and member of the Senate Finance Committee, I have had my niece full time since she was about 1 ½ years old, she is now 9 years old. The first time that we brought her home to take care of here she was 2 weeks old, and we did this after receiving a call from her biological mother. Her mother Tabitha was crying freaking out and the baby (Georgie) was screaming and crying in the background. Tabitha was freaking out saying she couldn't get Georgie to stop crying and was on the verge of shacking her. We told her not to do that and not to freak out we were on the way. We took her home for the first time that night and kept her for almost a week.

Once we started court proceedings, we were able to show that we had Georgie for over 6 months of the first year of her life with videos and pictures, though we know it was more because we didn't take pictures/video every day. This was something that helped us to get temp orders to care for her and visitation for Tabitha. During one of those visitations Georgie was with Tabitha, she came home with a handprint bruise on her. We got Emergency Custody Orders the next day, and that was when we had her full time moving forward. We had those orders for almost 3 years which is normally unheard of, because when she did take us back to court, they were shocked they were still in place. We have been in and out of court for her whole life basically with her biological mom and currently I am the custodial guardian of Georgie. She has visitation with her biological mom once a week (1 week Friday over night to Saturday, the other weekend 8 hours on Saturday) and with my ex every Saturday night to Sunday. It is a fight every week to get her to go to Tabitha's house, but she is still not old enough to speak with the judge about what she wants. They were going to this past time in court, but it was settled before she had to do this.

I have been taking care of her financially by my self for the last 5 going on 6 years. I just started to get child support from my brother because it was court ordered this past time we were in court. It is the bare minimum, as he was not working when they got the information. I make too much money to receive any kind of services through jobs and family like welfare. I would do anything for my niece and any struggles that I might endure I would do any day so that she can have a happy and healthy life. Some kind of protection for her would be great, and someone to listen to her and what she wants.

There are thousands of kinship caregivers in Ohio like myself who need House Bill 96 to pass to enrich the lives of the children. We need to have the OWF "Child Only" cash assistance payment increased to \$600 and per child. This will help us pay for the high cost of food, utilities, daycare, play sports, dental braces and yes, AMC Movie or dinner out on a special occasion.

The cost of Foster Care is far more than we kinship families receive. There are many families who do not receive any assistance because their income is counted for eligibility; SNAP and childcare are examples. Programs are needed to help all kinship families reach the goal of stability and meet financial needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today.