

**May 13 , 2025**

**Health Committee**

**Kinship Care Testimony**

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston and the rest of the committee, thank you for your time. My name is Diane Howard and I am one of two co-chairs of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality. I'm also a CMHA commissioner in Cleveland appointed by Mayor Bibb. I have 21 grandchildren and 49 great grandchildren and have provided kinship care to four of my grandchildren.

I am here today to advocate for increased funding and support to Ohio's Kinship Care programs. As a former kinship care provider, it was very difficult to provide care to my grandchildren in addition to my other caregiving responsibilities especially without financial support to assist me with the additional childcare, educational and medical expenses.

Caregivers with limited income are already stretched thin and they receive minimal financial assistance from the state to provide for the removed children. Increasing financial assistance to be more in line with foster care funding saves the state money in the long term by enabling more kinship care providers who live on limited or fixed incomes the ability to provide the kinship care and prevent children from being placed in foster care which is far more costly to the state. As I can attest to myself, studies have shown

that children who have been placed with relatives over foster care have better outcomes growing up and as adults.

Increasing financial support and providing publicly funded childcare for kinship caregivers, will enable more grandparents and relatives to provide kinship care which is badly needed.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.