



Senator Michele Reynolds - 3rd District

Sponsor Testimony for SB 58: Child Care Credit Act

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 58, which I am jointly sponsoring with Senator Craig.

This legislation expands who is eligible to execute a power of attorney or caretaker authorization affidavit for a child in Ohio. Under current law, only grandparents can obtain these legal tools to care for children who are not their own. Senate Bill 58 broadens this authority to include other relatives and qualified non-relatives who have an established relationship with the child or the child's family.

Specifically, this bill would allow the following individuals to serve as caretakers:

- Stepparents, step grandparents
- Aunts, uncles
- Siblings, step siblings, half siblings
- Nieces, nephews
- First cousins
- Any relative denoted by the prefix "grand" or "great"
- A non-relative adult who has a relationship or bond with the child or child's family

This expansion is critically important for several reasons:

First, we know that family structures and caregiving arrangements are diverse. While grandparents play a vital role in caring for children, they are not always available or the

most appropriate caregiver in every situation. Other relatives or trusted adults may be better positioned to provide care and stability for a child.

Second, this bill maintains strong safeguards while providing more options. Caretakers must still be at least 18 years old and cannot have legal custody of the child. The existing process, documentation requirements, and oversight mechanisms remain in place.

Third, this change will help more children remain with trusted caregivers rather than entering the foster care system. When parents face challenges like illness, incarceration, or military deployment, having more qualified individuals able to legally care for their children provides better outcomes.

Finally, expanding eligible caretakers aligns with approaches taken in other states and recommendations from child welfare experts who emphasize the importance of maintaining children's connections to family and community.

This is common-sense legislation that puts children first while giving parents more options for ensuring their children are cared for by trusted adults when circumstances require it.

I'm happy to answer any questions from the committee.