

Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee Regarding SB 58

Larry Bresler, March 26, 2025

Committee Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, ranking member, Hudson and the other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee: my name is Larry Bresler. I have been an active member of the Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). NOBLE is an organization of citizens who work to give a voice for impacted persons for critical needs including kinship care. I am also a social worker who has taught for the past 18 years at Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, their school of social work.

I am here today to urge the passage of SB 58, legislation that would expand power of attorney eligibility to become a kinship care giver with I am here today to urge the passage of SB 58, legislation that would expand the Grandparent Power of Attorney and Caregiver Authorization Affidavit to other kinship caregivers. This would permit them to be able to enroll the child in school and participate in their educational process; obtain medical treatment and other needs that the child might have that would require a parent's authorization.

As you are aware kinship care is the raising of children who can no longer live with their parents (either permanently or temporarily) by grandparents, other close family members, or other adults with whom they have a close family like relationship. In study after study, it has been found that children who have to be removed from their biological parents fare far better in kinship care over foster care for a variety of reasons, a few of which include

- It minimizes trauma for the children,
- It improves children's well-being.
- Improves their behavioral and mental health outcomes
- They have better educational outcomes and stability
- It provides a greater opportunity for continued family connections with an opportunity for family reunification.

As a result of these many studies the federal government for decades has mandated a preference for kinship care.

42 U.S.C. 671, says states must *"consider giving preference to an adult relative over a nonrelated caregiver when determining placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant state child protection standards."*

However, many kinship care givers or potential kinship care givers, particularly a child's relatives, are not financially able, have the time, or knowledge to go through a court process to become a legal kinship care guardian. This becomes a disincentive and major obstacle for non-grandparent potential caregivers to become kinship caregivers. Consequently, there have certainly been many instances where children are remaining in homes where either the parents fully recognize that they do not have the capacity to serve as adequate parents at that time or

alternatively, the local county department of child and human services remove the children and place them in foster or group homes when there were other caregiver options available.

Expanding the power of attorney to all caregivers, would add no additional financial burden to the State of Ohio. In fact, it could potentially save the state and counties funds since fewer children would have to be formerly removed from their parent's custody and placed in foster care or groups homes accompanied with the substantial expense that goes with that.

In conclusion the passage SB 58 would not only put Ohio in conformity with the other 49 states in expanding power of attorney eligibility to become a legal caregiver from just grandparents to other caregivers, but it would enhance the opportunities and well-being for our children where the parents have recognized they are not currently in a position to being adequately able to care for their children.

Thank you
Larry Bresler