



March 26, 2025

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony **in support of SB 58 (Reynolds, Craig) - Expand Eligibility Grandparent POA Caretaker Affidavits**. Benjamin Rose is a Cleveland-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to serve as a trusted partner in the aging journey for individuals of all backgrounds as well as those who care for them. Since 1908, the skilled and compassionate professionals at Benjamin Rose have supported the aging journeys of adults and their families through the discovery, development and delivery of accessible programs and services that ensure each person is heard, treated with dignity, and positioned for a better tomorrow. Benjamin Rose services promote health and wellbeing, support housing and homeownership, and enhance financial wellness. In addition, we are an independent, applied research institution that addresses everyday issues faced by older people and their families. We use this knowledge to develop innovative solutions and foster informed engagement on issues impacting the field of aging. In 2024, more than 170,000 individuals accessed a service provided by Benjamin Rose. Many of the people served by Benjamin Rose in Ohio are low-income, with an average household income of \$16,000 per year.

As you are aware, this legislation expands who is eligible to execute a power of attorney or caretaker authorization affidavit for a child in Ohio. Under current Ohio Revised Code, grandparents can gain these legal tools to care for children when a parent is not able, or available. Senate Bill 58 widens this authority to include other relatives and qualified non-relatives who have an established relationship with the child or the child's family. SB 58 allows 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" and a non-relative adult who has a relationship or bond with the child or child's family.

Kinship care is a form of out-of-home care where a child is placed with a relative (like a grandparent, aunt, or uncle) or close family friend when their parents are unable or unwilling to provide full-time care. In our years working with family caregivers, we have seen the importance of having engaged and loving caregivers. "Family" can include many people who provide informal (and often uncompensated) support for a loved one. A grandparent or other family who may be willing to take on the responsibilities of kinship care often faces challenges navigating the legal system or establishing their legal status to make decisions on behalf of the child.

While maintaining the same process for designating caretakers and ensuring the safety of children, the bill provides opportunities on a number of fronts. SB 58 will enable more children to be housed and cared for by direct family members. It will also allow Ohioans to recognize and engage with individuals that can provide needed support for children at risk. SB 58 allows for alternatives to traditional caregiving and enables more individuals to be considered for these important responsibilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB 58.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Orion H. Bell IV". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name "Bell" being more prominent.

Orion H. Bell IV
President & CEO
Benjamin Rose