



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

Senate Judiciary Committee
Proponent Testimony on SB 58
March 26, 2025
Mary Wachtel, Director of Public Policy
Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO)
37 W Broad Street, Suite 1100, Columbus, OH 43215
mary@pcsao.org
614.616.0328

Good morning, Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on SB58 *Expand eligibility: grandparent POA, caretaker affidavits*. I am Mary Wachtel, Director of Public Policy for the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's 88 county Public Children Services Agencies that advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

PCSAO thanks Sen. Reynolds and Sen. Craig for bringing forward this bill to strengthen and support kinship care and to ensure children are not denied access to health care and education solely because they are being raised by someone other than their parents. Children are raised by kin for a wide variety of reasons such as their parents' military deployment, in another state for a job, incarceration, or severe psychological, cognitive, or physical challenges. And some children are raised by kin because a court has determined that they cannot remain safely at home with their parents and grants temporary custody to a PCSA or directly to the kin.

Census data show that in 2023, 81,400 Ohio grandparents were raising grandchildren; while not quantified, we know that many, many more Ohio children are living with relatives other than grandparents. In addition, approximately one-fourth of Ohio children in PCSA custody are placed with an approved kinship caregiver.

Many Ohio children are raised by kin without a legal relationship such as legal custody or guardianship which can result in challenges enrolling children in school, advocating for educational services, or consenting to health care. Recognizing this challenge, Ohio established the grandparent power of attorney and the caretaker authorization affidavit. SB58 would extend the use of these consent documents to other relatives and to nonrelative caregivers who have an established, significant relationship with the family and child. This change is long overdue—Ohio is the only state in the country that limits these consent documents to grandparents only. SB58 will align Ohio with other states’ policies and, most importantly, will ensure that Ohio children being raised by all kinship caregivers will be able to enroll in school, be able to rely on their caregiver’s voice regarding educational services if needed, and receive health care.

Members of the Committee, for all these reasons, PCSAO requests your support for SB58 and for Ohio’s wide range of kinship caregivers. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

