



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Andre E. Gonzalez  
**Brookfield, WI**

Stephanie W. Harris  
**Columbus**

Helena Haynes-Carter  
**Cleveland**

Helen Jones-Kelley, JD  
**Dayton**

Cynthia R. Latney, DHA(c),  
MSN, RN, NE-BC  
**Columbus**

Kathie Mancini  
**Columbus**

Doni Miller, JD  
**Toledo**

Dr. Anahi Ortiz, MD  
**Columbus**

V. Lanna Samaniego  
**Celina**

Richard E. Spencer, Jr.  
**Englewood**

Diana C. Starks, MA, BBA  
**Cleveland**

Jack Thomas, Ph.D.  
**Wilberforce**

Barbara A. Turpin  
**Columbus**

**Advisory Board:**

Victor L. Leandry, LSW, MSW  
**Lorain**

Dr. Yung Chen Lu, Ph.D.  
**Columbus**

Theresa Wukusick, MS  
**Vermilion**

Cheryl A. Boyce, MS\*  
**Chair Emeritus/  
Co-Founder**

**PRESIDENT & CEO**

Ronald R. Browder

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

Testimony on SB 58

March 26, 2025

Ronald R. Browder, President

Ohio Federation for Health Equity and Social Justice

332 Hamilton Avenue

Columbus, OH 43215

[rbrowder@ohiofederationfortheequity.org](mailto:rbrowder@ohiofederationfortheequity.org)

614-620-5436

Good morning, Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Committee. I am Ronald R. Browder with the Ohio Federation for Health Equity and Social Justice (OFHESJ). The Federation works to address disparities and promote equity in the areas of health, child welfare, juvenile justice, education and economic opportunity.

One of the Federation's major areas of focus in the child welfare space is kinship care. Kinship Care occurs when a parent or parents are not able to provide for whatever reason for their children and the children are cared for by another relative or family friend with close ties to the child and family. More than 100,000 grandparents are raising 100,000 grandchildren in Ohio (American Community Survey 2022). The number of children being cared for by other relatives (siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins etc.) is 108,000 (American Community Survey 2022). These numbers continue to grow as a direct result of the opioid crisis and were made even more devastating by the CO-VID-19 pandemic.

Many caregivers continue to report that one of their greatest challenges in caring for the children is getting accurate legal information about their legal status with the child and legal supports available to their families. Many caregivers often are overwhelmed when searching for services and benefits and may not know about private resources or have the financial ability to access them. The Grandparent Power of Attorney (POA) and Caretaker Authorization Affidavit (CAA), which do not require financial resources to execute, are an additional tool to help families achieve stability.

In 2023, the Federation initiated an education campaign with the Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition and the Ohio Poverty Law Center, to inform policymakers and communities of the need to expand the Grandparent Power of Attorney and Caretaker Affidavit Authorization to additional kinship caregivers. Many organizations around the state have also been very vocal in their support of this effort, the Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE), The Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition (NEOBHC), the Ohio Family Care Association to name a few. For 20+ plus years, this tool has been available to grandparents who care for their grandchildren. In fact, Ohio led the nation in the creation of this mechanism to enable grandparents to enroll children in school, obtain needed medical care etc. Currently Ohio is the only state that limits this ability to grandparents. All 49 other states permit other kinship caregivers ie, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and others to access this process. It is time to move Ohio from being the outlier.

Finally, while there has been some progress in supporting kinship families, there is still a significant disconnect in terms of support these families have available. Significant state revenues are being saved by these families who step forward to keep their relative children from entering the system. Reducing the number of children from entering the foster care system, while helping to maintain

\*Deceased

familial ties by ensuring that kinship families receive the services, they need is critical to healthy development and will ultimately produce positive outcomes for the children.

We commend the leadership of Senator Reynolds and Senator Craig for their efforts to provide kinship caregivers with a tool which helps to keep children with their families and from unnecessarily entering the foster care system.

We thank you again Senator Manning and the entire Committee and we appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and would be happy to answer any questions at the committee's convenience.