

Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski and Members of the Civil Justice Committee, I am here today in support of HB108. I am the reason for HB108. Early Thanksgiving morning 2016 my 30 year old develop mentally challenged daughter Candice passed away from complications after a major knee surgery. Worst day of my life. I was not prepared for that. You never expect to live longer than your child. The following day was not much better. My friend Sue drove me to the funeral home. The funeral director was nice and walked us through making the arrangements. After everything was set he told me about the stupid Ohio law that said I owned 50% of Candice's body and her dad owned 50% and I needed to get his permission to cremate her, I was shocked. I said she had not seen her in 10 years at his choosing. He told me they could not proceed until we had his permission. I lost it. He left the room. Here I am grieving the loss of my daughter that I took care of for 30 years and once again I am responsible for getting my ex to do something. Not Fair.

Thankfully for me he owed back child support. They knew where he was. Under Ohio law they cannot tell me his information. I was stuck between 2 Ohio laws. The one thing in my favor was a friend who works with the Summit County Coroner. He contacted CSEA. He requested they contact my ex and have him call his office. My friend was able to speak to my ex, who then called me and signed the papers one week after Candice's death.

It was about 6 months later that I decided I wanted to fix this stupid law. As of this point it has been a failure only journey, but I am not going anywhere until this is fixed. I do not understand why the Funeral Directors Association is fighting fixing this law. They have never come out in public to explain why this law is necessary, as per statue they cannot be sued for performing a cremation.

As most of you are attorneys, I am sure you understand case law. There is no case law were a funeral home was sued by a relative of a decedent. There is one case where a relative of a decedent sued an executor and the coroner, but he lost at the Supreme Court. Shortly there after the court proceedings this law was instituted. So why do we need this law? Why has OFDA fought this law every step of the way? Is it because some funeral homes charge to store bodies. Do they want to see people suffer more? We don't know because they have never spoken publicly about the reasons they want to keep this bill from passing. They lobby behind closed door and donate money to politicians, buying their votes. The current law only covers spouses, parents, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren, yet they force cousins to find cousins. They are adding to the law and torturing families.

Under the current law, half siblings are they same as full blooded. My son has at least one half sibling he saw one time 36 years ago. So his sister that he grew up with would have to find a sibling she and he never knew? That is just crazy.

Over the years I have heard other horror stories of families having to find people who walk away. A man found out he had cancer and died 2 months later. He was 50. He had not seen his dad since he was a baby. His mother in her 70s had to find her ex. Some how he was located in a nursing home in South Carolina. The mom died within a year of her son's passing.

Why is it our responsibility to find them? My ex had all the rights, but none of the responsibilities. He was not there when Candice spent about 2 weeks in the hospital when she had neuroleptic malignant syndrome. I worked on a trash truck 64 hours a week and spent my nights with her. My elderly mother or friends from church spent the days with her. I asked him to spend one night with her and he could not be bothered. In sometime in 2007 he left town without saying goodbye to our daughters

and he never looked back. His mother died in 2010 and I had just seen him in court. His family had no clue where he was so I tried to fix it. Assistant Prosecutor John Galonski who had also just seen my ex in court the week before called my ex for me and told him there was a death in his family and he should call his family. He did not. So once again in 2016 I had all the responsibility and he had all the rights.

You recently passed a bill giving self storage and tow truck companies relief from people who walk away from their responsibilities and their stuff. You heard of a problem and fixed it for them. I am telling you about a problem and I want you to help fix it. Why should we have to find people who walk away? Keep these things in mind. First we don't own bodies. Second, only people in the decedents life should make decisions for the arrangements. I realize that not a lot of people may not know about this law unless you have been in my shoes. You don't want to be in my shoes. Please help grieving families.

Catherine Morrison