

Hello Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the Civil Justice Committee. I am honored that I am able to provide written testimony to you on House Bill 289. As a licensed foster parent, I have many first-hand stories of how kids in care do not receive stability. I appreciate that House Bill 289 is called the Stability Act, because kids in care need to be given stability. Kids in care typically are in care because of an action or event of their parents or caregivers, not because of anything they have done wrong. Kids in foster care should never be shuffled around to multiple homes, as the trauma many of them have experienced is already too much. We are taught in our training, and as a nurse I can attest- that moves hurt kids.

I appreciate that House Bill 289 has improved the search for relatives for kids in care, which would decrease the number of homes that children are moved to- having these relatives come forward at the very beginning of the process. These relatives then also may be able to help the biological parents, early on in the case, overcome the obstacles that may have created the issue.

In one of our cases, we have been able to be present at every court hearing, and are asked if we have anything to add. In another one of our cases, we were never allowed even in the court room, so we sat in the hallway every hearing. I have noticed that courtroom participation varies, depending on which county the case is in. There is no consistency between counties. In being in the court room, there are many aspects of the case that we are able to hear about—both good and bad. Because the children are in our home, we probably know more about the child than anybody else involved in the case. Often, (for the case we are allowed in court for) we are asked clarifying questions- because the biological parents, caseworkers, or attorneys do not know the answers.

I would like to remain anonymous at this time (as we currently have an active-foster-license, and an open-case placement in our home). If you would like to personally connect with me for more information, please contact Representative McClain and he can share my contact information with you.

I am asking that you please support House Bill 289. Knowing that kids in care will be given more chances at stability, this is going to have a huge impact on the future of our kids!

Respectfully submitted,

A.S.