



Chad Wilson
AVP, Government Relations

September 28, 2021

The Honorable Brett Hillyer
Ohio House of Representatives
Chairman, Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Re: HB 339 (Swearingen) Power of Attorney Laws

Dear Chairman Hillyer,

On behalf of Nationwide, please support passage of HB 339, which would expand the laws on wills, declarations or living wills, durable powers of attorney for health care, and transfer on death designation affidavits by providing for their execution electronically. Founded in 1926, Nationwide is headquartered in Columbus, Ohio and is proud to provide thousands of jobs in the state and 1.25 million policies to Ohio residents, including being the number one writer of farms and ranches and small businesses. Our mission is simple, we exist to protect people, businesses and futures with extraordinary care.

As a protection company, Nationwide understands the importance of estate planning. An estate plan, even a basic one, can minimize confusion and the costs involved in dealing with your estate after you die, which can ease the stress on your family. While it can be a difficult topic to address, ultimately, it's an important one. Without the roadmap that an estate plan provides, your assets can wind up in legal limbo for years, putting a burden on loved ones and family members who are left to deal with sorting out your finances. It's estimated that over half of those aged 55 and older have not yet created a will. To make matters worse, even fewer have all of the recommended legacy plan essentials: a will, a health care directive, and durable power of attorney. HB 339 will help encourage and make it easier for individuals to begin that process.

Currently, Ohio law allows you to create estate planning documents, such as wills, electronically but does not allow you to execute those documents online. With more and more personal and business transactions being done digitally, estate planning has lagged behind the technology. Even before COVID-19 made social distancing necessary, allowing for the electronic signature of wills and other estate planning documents were gaining traction. A number of states, including our neighbor Indiana, have passed laws allowing for the electronic signature of wills and even more states are considering it. Ultimately, this legislation will bring the estate planning process in line with the benefits of modern-day technology while maintaining and even enhancing the safeguards in place today.

As a company that exists to protect people, businesses and futures with extraordinary care, Nationwide strongly supports and urges the Ohio General Assembly to pass this legislation. HB 339 will not only make it easier for individuals to execute their estate planning documents, but it will hopefully encourage more Ohioans and their families to begin having those important conversations and develop plans of their own.

Sincerely,

Chad Wilson
AVP, Government Relations

Cc: Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
Representative Swearingen