



**Ohio House of Representatives
House Civil Justice Committee**

September 28, 2021

Proponent Testimony on HB 289

Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 289.

My name is Pam Priddy, and I am the Chief Strategy Officer for Necco. Necco is a foster care, independent living, residential and behavioral health company founded in 1996. In addition, Necco provides services to young adults that have aged out of foster care and are transitioning into adulthood through independent living programs. While Necco is headquartered in Cincinnati, they also operate throughout all of Ohio, Georgia, West Virginia, and Kentucky. To date, Necco has built over 25,000 families and completed over 5,000 adoptions.

House Bill 289 makes changes to Ohio's foster care system to ensure a child is placed in the most secure and loving environment and will also reduce trauma. Of course, reunification with the biological parent is the ultimate goal, but until that is possible, placement with a close relative or familiar adult is preferred. If a close relative or adult is not an option, the child is placed with a foster care family.

Under current law, a child that has been placed with a nonrelative and/or a foster care family for a significant amount of time, can be released to a biological family member should the family member decide to step up, even years later. Disrupting the child's home life and removing them from a stable nonrelative and/or foster care family, may certainly not be in the best interest of the child and increase trauma.

This bill maintains the requirements to search for a relative and prioritizes placement with a family member. However, what the legislation permits is the court to consider the foster care family as "kin" if they have an established





relationship where they have been living with them 9 months or longer with the same consideration as the relative. The changes proposed in this bill recognizes the bond the child has made with the foster family and will ensure children in the foster care system live in the most stable and safe environment.

Chairman Hillyer and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony in support of this important legislation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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