

October 4, 2021

Ohio House Civil Justice Committee

Proponent Testimony HB 352

Prohibit blindness from denying or limiting care of minor

Submitted by Ja'leesa Spradling

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and Members of the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 352. I am 30 years of age and a totally blind parent of two kids. My oldest step daughter, Hannah, is 16 years of age and my youngest son, Ash, is now 3 years old.

When I met my partner six years ago, he not only chose me to be his life's partner, but wanted me to be a Mother to his one and only young and impressionable daughter. He believed in me and never once questioned if I could be a good Mom. Since then, we had been blessed with our newest bundle of joy.

I never thought this would happen, but the hospital tried their best to ruin the welcoming of my sweet baby boy. They were always questioning my intelligence and my ability to raise a son. It was supposed to be a joyous and amazingly unforgettable experience. Instead, my magical experience was constantly interrupted with doubt, suspicion, and complete ignorance with my capabilities as a blind woman.

The hospital did not only threaten to take away my son, they also nearly killed me! The 'professional' were too distracted by my blindness that they failed to realize that they had accidentally cut a vital organ during my C-section and I was slowly dying from internal bleeding.

In June of 2018, I was having to fight for my life while fighting for my rights to be a Mom. I strongly urge Ohio to immediately consider what this type of discrimination means and urge the committee to pass legislation that would not allow other Mothers to be treated as I had been.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 352.

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