

October 4, 2021

Ohio House Civil Justice Committee

Proponent Testimony HB 352

Prohibit blindness from denying or limiting care of minor

Submitted by Randi Stringer

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 a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, a devoted housewife, and 40 years of age.

I grew up with sight and began to lose my vision twenty years ago. I am now forty years of age and do not have any children. I have always wanted to be a Mom and when I discovered that I was losing my vision, that dream did not seem possible any more. I did not have any acquaintances with any blind parents and didn't know if I could be a good parent. I would share with my peers and family about my desires of still having a family one day. Everyone told me that it was a really bad idea, it would be far too challenging, and that it wasn't fair to my kids to have to have a blind Mother. I, sadly, listened to all the negativity and never had kids of my own.

If I had the friends and associates that I have now, back then, I would not have allowed others to discourage me from having my own family. I have since met many blind individuals and blind parents that have done a wonderful and remarkable job in raising their children. They have shown me that blindness does not have to hold you back and that we can accomplish anything we put our minds to. No parent should have to prove competence simply because he or she is blind or disabled.

I believe the legislature must establish procedural safeguards that require adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act and respect for the due process and equal protection rights of disabled parents or prospective disabled parents in child welfare, foster care, family law, and adoption. This committee have the power to add Ohio to the momentum that is gathering across the country for this kind of preventative legislation that has been passed in ten other states in the past few years, from Maryland to Utah to Illinois.

I wish I had had the support and confidence then; I may have had a family by now. Discrimination kills self-confidence and destroys dreams and that's, what's not fair.

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

Randi Stringer

1991 Sunlight Court

Lancaster, Ohio 43130

Phone: (443) 750-0070

Email: randi.yfc@gmail.com