

October 25, 2021

Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee

Proponent Testimony S.B. 202

Prohibit blindness from denying or limiting care of minor

Submitted by Patricia A McPherson

Chair Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 202. I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, a retiree, parent of an adult daughter and 60 plus years of age.

I grew up with sight and began to lose my vision twenty years ago. I was very fortunate when I became disabled that my daughter was grown and I cannot imagine the heartache of my child being taken away from me. When I was in high school, there was a boy in my class that had two blind parents. He was always well groomed, well adjusted happy and an excellent student. I know of cases where babies were taken away from their mothers after birth and sometimes it took several years to get the babies back to the parent(s). Now 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 has 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.

I find it heartbreaking every time I hear about a situation where children are being taken away from parents based solely on blindness. 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 S.B. 202.

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