

**Ohio Judicial Conference**

The Voice of Ohio Judges

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**Paul Pfeifer**

**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 511**

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to submit proponent testimony for House Bill 511 on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference. I am Paul Pfeifer, Executive Director of the Ohio Judicial Conference, former Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio and former State Senator and Representative.

The Ohio Judicial Conference supports H.B. 511’s efforts to raise the age of marriage in Ohio. The bill would generally raise Ohio’s age of marriage to 18 years old with reasonable exceptions for 17-year-olds who have joined the military, are employed and self-subsisting, or are otherwise independent from the care and control of the juvenile’s parent or guardian. Under the bill, a 17-year-old will only be permitted to marry if their intended spouse is no more than four years older than the juvenile. The juvenile court would maintain discretion to consider relevant factors before granting consent for 17-year-olds to marry.

With this bill, Ohio joins a nationwide movement to raise the age of juvenile marriage. In the last two years, similar legislation has been passed in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Although the specific details differ across these states, the unifying feature is that they all raised the floor age of juvenile marriage.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 511. I am available to answer any questions you may have.