

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 2/10/2020

Name: CATHERINE MORRISON

Are you representing: Yourself YES Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (If Applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 397

Specific Issue: RIGHT OF DESPOSITION

Are you testifying as a: Proponent X Opponent \_\_\_\_\_ Interested Party \_\_\_\_\_

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes  
No \_\_\_\_\_

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 10 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I AM THE REASON FOR HB 397

Chairman Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking member Brown, and members of the Civil Justice Committee, I am here in support of HB397. I am the reason for HB397. Thanksgiving Day 2016 was the worst day of my life. My 30 year-old develop mentally delayed daughter passed away around 3 AM while recovering from a surgery to repair a broken knee. My daughter was never sick. She rarely saw a doctor, but a blood clot took her life. I was in shock. I was numb and in a fog. How? The following day my friend Sue Favaro went with me to the funeral home. She had lost her husband 6 months earlier and she was there to support me. As I was making the arrangements the funeral director told me that under Ohio law I had to have her father's permission to cremate her. I told him she had not seen her dad in 10 years. He said that did not matter. I lost it. He left the room. My friend had to hold me up. I was in disbelief. A man that chose to walk away from his daughters could prevent me from taking my daughter home with me. I could not wrap my mind around it. The funeral director told me I could send certified mail to the last known address and wait for it to come back or maybe his family knew where he was. Once again I told him I had no clue where he was and neither did his family. There was still some paperwork not signed left over after his mother passed away a couple of years before. My saving grace was that he owed back child support and the Summit County Child Support Enforcement Agency knew where he was. I knew they would not tell me where he was, but a friend of mine, Bob, is an attorney for Summit County stepped in and asked that the agency call my ex and have him call Bob's office. My ex called Bob and Bob gave him the news. He signed the papers a week after her death.

After this was all over I decided that I had to fix this stupid law, especially after a neighbor of a friend of mine had the same problem. Her son died 6

weeks after finding out he had cancer. He was 54. He had not seen his dad in 50 years. She was also told she had to get the permission of his father for cremation. The father was found in a nursing home in North Carolina. The mother would have been here today to support this bill, but she died 6 months after her son.

Most people I talk to think it is ridiculous what I went through. Governor DeWine thought it was crazy. He understood my pain of losing a daughter, but he did not have to find an ex and get permission to cremate his daughter. There have been some politicians say that what about the rights of the other parent? My answer is what about their responsibilities? I took care of my daughter for 30 years. When she was a senior in high school she developed neuroleptic malignant syndrome. She was in the hospital and for quite a while because they did not know what she had. I was recently remarried, and I worked driving a trash truck all day, home to shower and head off to spend the night at the hospital. My over 80 year old mother and friends from church spent their days at the hospital with her. I asked my ex to spend one night with her so I could go home and he said yes. That evening I called the hospital to check on her and the nurse told me her father left her alone and went home. I was livid. One night, one lousy night and he could not be a dad. So now under Ohio law I, the one who was always there, had to find the guy who walked away from his responsibilities in my time of unthinkable grief.

Over the past 3 years I have talked to hundreds of people. All are shocked that the law required me to find my ex as Candice was an adult. They encourage me to continue on this quest to fix this law. No one is going to make money over fixing this law, however

you can be the legislature that prevent someone else from going through what I went through. How would you feel in the future if a friend of yours finds out on the day their child died that they must find an ex who walked away? Then they realize that you had a chance to fix this law and didn't. What would you say to them then? Sorry. That will not be enough to comfort them.

I have devoted my self to fixing this law and I will not go away until it is fixed. Just ask the Ohio Funeral Directors' Association. Even with a torn displaced meniscus I picketed their convention because they fought against fixing the previous version HB510 last session. I belong to a support group of parents that have lost children. My group told me that if I was on twitter my hashtag would be I am not going away. So let me just say I am not going away until this is fixed. Do the right thing and stop torturing single parents in their time of tremendous loss.

Catherine Morrison