Testimony in support of H.B. 405

By Jeanette M. Moll, Esq.

Ladies and Gentleman,

I’m here in support of H.B. 405 which will provide low interest loans for the purpose of adoption. I am:

1. An adoption and family lawyer;
2. A guardian ad litem for dozens of Ohio’s abused, neglected, and dependent children;
3. A foster parent on and off for more than 2 decades (until 12/19);
4. A licensed adoptive parent who has adopted both privately and within the public, foster care system;
5. A member of Ohio’s Adoption Law Roundtable;
6. A frequent volunteer judge at the National Adoption and Family Law Moot Court competition;
7. The author of a portion of Ohio’s adoption law which permits adoption by legal custodians after parental abandonment; and
8. An advocate for additional changes in Ohio’s adoption laws to increase stability and finality for Ohio’s families and children.

H.B. 405 fills a gap to assist families to adopt by providing low interest loans for this purpose.

We live in a culture that, due to the opiate epidemic, results in fewer and fewer children returning to their biological parents after intervention by Ohio’s Children Services agencies. Statistically, drug addiction requires 7 to 8 times in rehab to be successful. Ohio’s laws recognize the need for children to have finality and stability such that the clock is ticking to allow between one and two years to successfully work a reunification plan in an open juvenile court abuse, neglect and/or dependency case. Thus, there is frequently not time to for a biological parent to get clean, maintain sobriety, and reunify in the vast majority of the cases.

Ohio’s vulnerable children are placed in families which receive legal custody or agencies which receive permanent custody. These families may be kinship placements or foster parents. Court costs and attorney fees for adoption are expensive. These families instantly have additional children to provide for and the related expenses. The families frequently lack the ability to pay for adoptive home studies and the other costs associated with adoptions which are often needed to commence the adoption process.

My family has received calls and had a child or children in our home within an hour who later becomes a permanent placement. Thus, I know firsthand, that often there is not time or opportunity to do long range planning for your forever family. This bill offers the opportunity to secure a loan and extend the payment of the costs up to and including seeking reimbursement through the federal adoption credit program.

This bill offers these children and families a means to finalize stability and become forever families. This bill is an important and needed step in the right direction. I urge you to vote in support of H.B. 405.