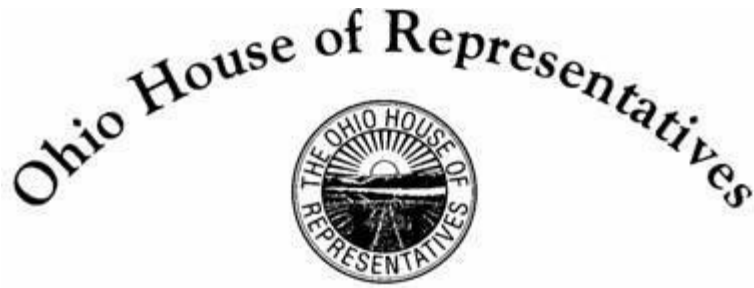


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Committees

Energy and Natural Resources
Committee

Insurance Committee

Public Utilities Committee

Rules and Reference Committee

Sharon A. Ray

State Representative
Assistant Majority Whip

Chairman Manning, Vice Chairwoman Reynolds, Ranking Member Paula Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee – thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 5 – the Adoption Modernization Act.

As an adopted child, I was thrilled when the Ohio Association of Probate Judges mentioned they were working on modernizing and streamlining the adoption process here in Ohio. Their modernization committee has been tirelessly working with probate judges around the state to develop recommendations that would update current law to align the adoption process with Supreme Court precedent, increase consistency from county to county and address the unnecessary length and cost to finalize certain adoptions.

The accumulation of these recommendations resulted in the Adoption Modernization Act.

I want to take a minute to highlight three key provisions of the bill:

First, this bill would provide increased financial support for expectant mothers. By increasing financial support from \$3,000 to \$6,000 for living expenses, we are supporting the health and well-being of the mother and the child.

Second, for foster to adopt scenarios, current Ohio law requires a six-month waiting period before an adoption can occur. Current law also allows for time spent in the foster home to be counted towards this six-month waiting period. The adoption modernization act extends this practice to kinship caregivers, ultimately expediting the adoption process for family members of the child.

Finally, the bill clarifies the Ohio revised code by eliminating needless delays and unnecessary duplicative actions to help streamline the adoption process.

The State of Ohio has over 3,000 children looking for a family to call their own. Modernizing the adoption process is a step in the right direction for our children and families. Ohio needs this legislation.

In the words of adoption advocate and Ohio icon Dave Thomas, "Every child deserves a home and love – period". I agree.

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Paula Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on the Adoption Modernization Act.

I would now like to turn it over to my joint sponsor on the bill – a woman who has firsthand experience with the adoption process, Representative Rachel Baker.