



**Ohio House Health and Aging Committee
Wednesday, January 15, 2013
Proponent Testimony HB 307
Kayla Smith, Director of Legislative Affairs**

Good Morning Chairman Wachtmann, Vice Chairwoman Gonzales, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the committee. My name is Kayla Smith, and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs for Ohio Right to Life. I am here today in favor of HB 307.

Since Sub. H.B. 307's last hearing two months ago we personally have been working very hard with the Ohio Adoption Roundtable, the Attorney General's Office, the Ohio State Bar Association, the Ohio State Judicial Conference, and other adoption lawyes, advocates, and parents to craft the best bill possible.

Unfortunately two experts we worked with daily could not be here to testify today, so I wanted to just highlight parts of their testimony.

Steve Kirsh is a nationally respected adoption lawyer who has won the Indiana Super Lawyer award the last 7 out of 7 years and has admission to both the Indiana and Supreme Court Bar. From his testimony: *"Frankly, in this legislation, Ohio is setting the bar fairly low for a putative father to protect his rights. Under Indiana law, he has to actually file a paternity action and ask the court to make him legally and financially responsible for the child for the next twentyone years in order to preserve his parental rights. Under House Bill 307, all he needs to do is register with the Ohio Putative Father Registry. In essence what HB 307 is asking of him to take a tiny step to express a desire to be involved in the adoption process, without any legal, financial, or emotional commitment."*

Nancy Burley is the Executive Director of Adoption Circle who has been practicing adoption for almost 30 years and was honored in 2011 by then Senator George Voinovich with the Angel in Adoption Award. From her testimony: *"The putative father under Ohio law is already on notice at the time of conception so he has nine months to register pre-birth. That is months before any post birth period begins. HB 307 is only making a 23 day change in the current law. Although there is no magic number this change is needed and significant as its protective for all parties. It allows for early decision making from birthparents and adoptive parents. In my opinion, from a practice prospective, it will result in fewer "at risk" placements as three of the seven days in this*



provision will be included in the 72 hours post birth that is required before a birthparent can surrender their parental rights."

Ladies and gentleman of the committee you have just heard only a small portion of these two nationally recognized adoption experts' opinion on this bill's provisions. As these experts claim, the fact of the matter is this bill is *good* policy. This bill allows low and middle income families to be able to attain something they otherwise could not. With the passage of this bill the likelihood of babies ending up in the foster care system, which is anything but a perfect life, is less and less likely. This piece of legislation creates an opportunity for *all* elected officials and advocates alike to band together and stand up for vulnerable children. This bill will help avoid so many potential problems that start in the beginning of a baby's life with a broken home. Why wouldn't anyone support that?

We would like to thank Representative Buchy, Representative Pelanda, and Chairman Wachtmann for their leadership on this critical legislation. We would also like to thank Ranking Member Antonio, and Representative Bischoff for their interest and assistance in amending this legislation to be even stronger than it was in it's original form.

We respectfully ask that you vote in favor of this legislation when brought up for a vote. At this time I will be happy to answer any questions.