



The **O**vercoming **H**urdles In **O**hio
Youth **A**dvisory **B**oard
www.fosteractionohio.org

We exist to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.

Samantha Dillon
[REDACTED]

Dear Representative Jay Edwards,

My name is Samantha Dillon, and I am a former foster youth writing to urge your support for House Bill 448, the Fostering Siblings Connections Act. HB 448 was introduced by Representatives Sarah LaTourette and Janine Boyd and is currently pending in the House Community and Family Advancement Committee.

Federal law already requires that states make efforts to sustain these connections, but Ohio law must be strengthened to ensure that this happens. This bill broadens the definition of siblings in a way that *reflects what foster youth experience*. It provides foster youth with the legal tools necessary to *make sure siblings stay connected*. It requires courts and placement agencies to make efforts to *place siblings together or permit ongoing interaction*.

I support this bill because I was separated from my sister because we had different dads. I was placed with my grandma. When I was 16, I was taken back into foster care and wasn't allowed to visit my older sister. Foster care is hard enough by itself – if you have siblings, you should at least be able to visit them.

This bill matters to me because I don't want other foster youth to experience separation from their siblings. Foster care is supposed to strive to keep families together. It isn't fair to siblings to split them up just because they have a different mother or father. Half-siblings still equals whole love.

Please support HB 448 to protect the rights of siblings under state care to continue these vital life-long relationships,

Sincerely,
Samantha Dillon
Vice President of Ohio Youth Advisory Board
Athens County

Cc: Representative Ginter, Chair Community and Family Advancement Committee