

**HB 448**  
**Proponent Testimony**  
**Amanda Davis**

Chairman Ginter, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee:

My name Amanda Davis, and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present my views on HB 448.

I was adopted at the age of 13, after four years in the foster care system. Currently, I am a social worker and child welfare trainer. I have written state approved curriculum on the importance of maintaining sibling connections while in foster care. Research has shown that when siblings in foster care are able to stay together and connected the outcomes are far greater for them. Youth experience less trauma, less behavioral concerns, perform better in school and connect better with their peers. Often times, when siblings are separated they have to go through the grieving process all over again. Foster parents and case workers who have worked with children all agree that it is best for children to remain close with their siblings. My state approved curriculum emphasizes this, but the sad irony is that our state laws do not support what we know to be best.

When siblings are able to keep in contact, they have better emotional, behavioral and psychological outcomes as a result. I can attest to this because of my personal experiences. When I was 11 years old, my younger half- brother who was almost four years old, left my foster home to be reunified with his father. Unfortunately, efforts were not made to keep us connected, and as a result, my sister and I had no contact with him for 8 years. This was the most significant loss I have ever experienced. My bond with my brother was very special, and for me to have no contact with him was devastating. At 11 years old, I

would be worried about his safety and well-being which is not something that young children should have to be concerned about. It was not until I was an adult, that I reached out on my own and was able to re-connect with him. After 8 years apart, he told me that " I have always known something was missing in my heart, and I knew it was my sisters." That is a powerful statement coming from a 12-year-old boy. But even after eight years, the emotional bond he had to us had left a mark on him. This is why we need to keep siblings connected, because the emotional bond does not go away.

As a child welfare professional and someone who has lived experience with this, I am passionate about how important this legislation is. It is time that our laws support what best practice says, and that is children in care need to stay connected with their siblings.

Chairman Ginter, this concludes my written remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.