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Good morning, Senate Human Services Committee,

I am here today to testify in opposition to House Bill 1556. Over the past few months, I have worked closely with several parents in the adoptive community, and a common concern is a need for more resources and support for adoptive families. However, these families strongly disagree with allowing the termination of parental rights due to behavioral challenges.

This bill offers a band-aid solution to a much deeper problem: the lack of adequate support for adoptive families. What these children truly need is care, stability, and access to effective services that address the root causes of their behavioral challenges, not abandonment through the termination of parental rights. This approach undermines the state's long-standing commitment to family unification, which has been shown through research to yield the best outcomes for children and their families.

I have gathered several recommendations directly from adoptive families regarding the resources they need but currently lack:

1. Expanded respite care options and an increased number of qualified respite care providers for high-needs children.
2. More intensive in-home services specifically tailored for adoptive families and children with high trauma backgrounds or severe behavioral challenges.
3. Increased availability of therapeutic out-of-home placements for children in crisis who require specialized care, along with more providers equipped to handle high-needs cases.
4. More trauma-informed training and services for families, caregivers, and therapists to better understand and address the complex needs of adopted children.
5. Post-adoption support services, including continued guidance, resources, and assistance once the child turns 18, as many families feel abandoned once their child reaches adulthood. This could include life skills training, supported independent living programs, and more group homes designed for individuals with high needs or disabilities.

I respectfully ask you to vote no on this bill and instead champion policies that foster family stability and long-term support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.