

# *Hearts at Home*

## Meeting the Needs of Women in the Profession of Motherhood

June 1, 2005

Dear Representative Willamowski:

As you discuss HB 256, I ask for your thoughtful consideration.

Since 1993, I have served as the Executive Director of Hearts at Home, an organization that encourages, educates, and equips mothers at home. We serve over 100,000 women each year with our resources and conference events.

Hearts at Home serves as a clearinghouse for information and resources for women who consider caring for their family their career choice. Over the years, we have been contacted many times by mothers for suggestions on handling jury duty requirements while caring for their children or a nursing infant. It is a dilemma that need not be faced by any mother in our country.

Families where one parent, usually the mother, stays home to care for the children rely on one income. To require an extended leave from the family can be both financially and emotionally devastating.

I have been faced with this personally. When our fourth child, Austin, was an infant, I was called to jury duty. Although I have always wanted to serve in this responsibility, doing so during this season of my life was a difficult, if not impossible, request. At the time I was summoned, I was nursing Austin every four hours. In discussing this with those in charge, I was told that was not a consideration. In addition to nursing Austin, I had two other children at home and one in school. The cost of daycare for my preschool children was overwhelming to think about. I had no family nearby to assist in a week's worth of care. And my nursing child needed his physical needs taken into consideration. I found no one who would value the hardship of my situation and found myself required to fulfill the responsibility. By the grace of God, I was called in only one day that week and only had to stay four hours. I truly do not know what our family would have done if more time had been required of me.

Please understand that I, and other moms like me, have every intention of fulfilling our responsibilities as citizens. We desire to do so. But with small children in our care, it makes it extremely difficult until those children are in school and old enough to care for themselves after school in the event of a long day in court. The same challenges apply to a person who is caring for an elderly or disabled family member or those who homeschool their children.

Several years ago the Illinois House and Senate wrestled with this issue as well. I had the opportunity to present a written testimony of behalf of mothers at home in the state of Illinois. Our efforts were successful with the passing of Public Act 91-0264 on July 23, 1999.

I urge you to strongly consider the importance of providing an exemption for jury duty to those who care for children under the age of 12, homeschooling parents, or those who care for an elderly or disabled family member. It is a bill that will serve the citizens of Ohio for many years to come.

**Jill Savage**

Mother of Five

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