

House Judiciary Committee
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chair Breen, Vice Chair Edwards, Vice Chair Fink, and members of the committee,

I write this letter in strong support of the Michigan Family Protection Act.

The Michigan Family Protection Act will comprehensively update parentage laws in the state of Michigan, ensuring that all children have equal access to the security of a legal parent-child relationship, regardless of the circumstances of the child's birth or the marital status, gender, or sexual orientation of their parents. A child's parental relationship is the foundation of their healthy development and well-being over a lifetime, and Michigan law must respect and protect all children.

Michigan has not updated its parentage statutes for a generation, which leaves our children vulnerable to many harms, including the threat of family separation, a lack of health insurance, and including many other vital protections. Michigan courts have tried to keep pace through the case law, but they need guidance and comprehensive policy to ensure that these core protections are codified in our statutes.

This bill is important to me because I am a mother through surrogacy.

I was born with a complex congenital heart defect, and have always known that it would not be safe for me to carry a pregnancy. My husband and I live here in Michigan, but quickly learned that Michigan is not a friendly place to seek surrogacy. Because of this, we did IVF in Michigan and had our frozen embryos moved to Indianapolis to work with an agency there. Our first son was born in Indiana in 2020. – We ultimately had a great experience with our agency, but Michigan's laws forced us to have to drive 5 hours away for every appointment and for our child's birth.

When we decided we wanted to have a second child, we again explored our options, and decided to move forward in Michigan with a friend as our surrogate. Because of the Surrogate Parenting Act of 1988, we knew we would not be able to compensate our friend or have an enforceable contract. In Michigan, the law also remains unclear as to who will legally be considered the child's parents upon birth. During this process, we had to go before a judge with our lawyers when our surrogate was about 7 months pregnant to have the judge determine whether we would be considered the legal parents of our biological child. Luckily, the judge ruled in our favor, but if she had not, we would have had to adopt our own biological child from our surrogate. Our second son was born in June 2023 and we are so grateful that we were able to build our family through surrogacy.

Both of our journeys would have been made easier if Michigan was a surrogacy friendly state. All the extra work and stress was so unnecessary.

This legislation is critical because Michigan law lacks clear standards to protect all involved in the surrogacy process, including the intended parents, donors, and people acting as surrogates. Best-practice guidance is long overdue.

Based on the Uniform Parentage Act of 2017, the Michigan Family Protection Act has been thoughtfully crafted by leading experts in parentage law to meet the needs of children and families. The bill will ensure that the Great Lakes State parentage laws remain constitutional, reflects best practices, and protect all children in our state.

I hope you will report the Michigan Family Protection Act favorably out of committee. Thank you so much for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional information.

Sincerely,

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