

House Judiciary Committee
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

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

My name is Katie Christian, and I am a lifelong Michigander currently residing in New York as a sophomore student at Columbia University. I am also an active member of COLAGE, a nonprofit advocacy organization for children with LGBTQ+ parents. I write this letter in strong support of the Michigan Family Protection Act.

Nearly twenty years ago, my two mothers knew that, no matter what, they would have a child. The question was whether or not Michigan law would recognize them both as my parents. Updating Michigan's parentage law is important to me because my mothers still fought tirelessly to fulfill their dream to become parents even though the legal path to parenthood in Michigan is unclear.

Following my conception through artificial insemination, I was not legally the child of one of my mothers. Michigan law does not adequately protect same-sex couples raising children, leaving the relationship between the non-biological parent and child vulnerable. Over the next two years after my birth, my parents were forced to prove their ability to love and care for me because parentage law claimed their verbal commitment was not enough. They braved the time-consuming, financially strenuous, and invasive process of second-parent adoption, all while one of my moms was deprived of custodial rights and decision-making authority for my well-being.

After obtaining the extensive paperwork and credentials necessary for second-parent adoption, they headed to court, and my mom with parental recognition had to terminate her rights for the process to take place. For a few minutes of my life, I was not the legal daughter of either of my mothers. Despite having two loving mothers who wanted more than anything to care for me, I was, at that moment, a child of the adoption agency my mothers worked with and my mothers were no more than legal strangers to me in, "the eyes of the law." Only after this emotionally grueling process took place were my mothers able to adopt me together and legally become my parents.

Today, Michigan still does not provide same-sex couples with equal access to securing rights as parents. Thousands of Michigan children continue to grow up experiencing the adverse effects of our state's law, undergoing the same legal jeopardy my family endured. While my mothers eventually gained parental rights, many families lack the knowledge, time, or money to bear these legal obstacles.

Although a young girl may grow up bragging about her two moms, by the time she reaches an age to reckon with the legal implications of her family, she will feel embarrassed and become more apprehensive about who she tells. This little girl was me and exemplifies a similar story for many other children with same-sex parents. Restrictive parentage law taught us that our families do not belong and to feel ashamed. But we did not know how to think or feel this way until learning this law. Aside from depriving us of legal protections, Michigan law has led too many of us children to fall victim to the stigmatization of our families.

I urge you to support the Michigan Family Protection Act because LGBTQ+ families like mine should be allowed to establish parentage like any other family. Sharing love no differently than other parents and children, we deserve to be treated as families in every sense of the word.

Sincerely,

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