

Written Testimony for 7/5 Meeting: Act 156 Task Force on Parentage Laws

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for the Act 156 Task Force. I stand in support of adopting the 2024 updated version of Article 9, which gives donor conceived individuals the ability to request medical history and identifying information about their genetic parent (the donor) if they desire to know this information after their 18th birthday. As a donor conceived person and a step-child adoptee, access to information about my identity is vital to my physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Being born from an anonymous donor means I am missing crucial details about my genetic background and origins, which impacts me as well as my children.

Although adoption and donor conception have a variety of differences, a common core uniting them both is a person grappling with a complex story of their identity. Adoptees and donor conceived people often hold a deep love for the family who raised them AND the curiosity and desire to know who their genetic family is. That desire may stem from wanting to understand where their unique traits come from, a fear of dating and potential incest, the potential to have relationships with half-siblings or other relatives, or the importance of having a complete medical history. Adoptee advocates have been working for decades for the rights to understand their origins, and donor conceived people deserve these rights as well. While no legislative solution could provide answers to every person questioning their background, gamete banks and fertility clinics know the identity of donors and when they refuse to share that information with donor conceived people, they intentionally withhold a crucial part of that person's identity. The 2024 Article 9 would require a donor to agree to the release of this information before ever donating gametes. I can fill out forms in my state to obtain my original birth certificate with my mother and intended father, but I am not able to access any information about my genetic father from his anonymous donation.

Families created through donor conception and adoption (except in rare circumstances) have contractual agreements signed by the genetic and intended parents (and in the case of donor conception an additional layer of agreements with the gamete banks). In both cases, a child born of these efforts has signed no contracts, and had no say in this arrangement. This individual's wellbeing should not be compromised because of the way they were conceived. Additionally, families created through donor conception should not have to absorb the lack of knowledge about their child's identity because of how they needed to build their family; my parents' need to use a sperm donor after my father's cancer treatments should not mean our family has less information because of anonymous donation. This causes ripple effects for generations, as now my children too have an incomplete medical history and an unknown number of relatives.

People who know that my first dad died of cancer acknowledge my desire to know more about him and his family. They validate that both my first dad and my adoptive dad both contributed in meaningful ways in my life. These acknowledgments disappear when talking about my genetic father, an anonymous sperm donor. All donor conceived people deserve to be able to access key pieces of their identity. Withholding this information perpetuates an environment of secrecy

and puts the burden on donor conceived people who want to learn more about themselves to investigate their identity through means such as direct-to-consumer DNA tests.

Thank you for your consideration of such an important topic to donor conceived individuals.

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