

Hello to Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

I am here today to speak regarding HB 1317, a bill to provide financial assistance for adoptions. I am speaking against this bill in its current form.

While I believe in providing financial help for both the medical bills for the biological birth parent and adoption cost for the adoptive parents, the bill's use of exclusionary words is troubling. This will dissuade many possible adoptions, not only for single parents and LGBTQ persons, but even those that may have considered adopting a child out of foster care.

I do understand that this bill is most concerned with decreasing the number of abortions, but I know at its heart it has the goal of protecting all children. With that in mind, I do believe that this assistance should also extend to adoptions of children in foster care.

Being able to provide a steady loving home for a child versus jumping from one foster home to another will greatly improve that child's life and to be a committee to potentially provide that life for a family. It would be a missed opportunity to allow this bill to go forward in its present form.

I myself have had a newborn child that went through the adoption process. I would like to take this time to speak on my experience and why I would not wish a similar financial struggle on anyone else going through this process. Out of respect and privacy for the adoptive mother and my biological daughter I will be using first initials only. For the adoptive mother, I will be using K, and for my biological daughter I will be using V. to give a little back story of K, she has an undergrad in Family Science, a master's in Marriage and Family therapy, and Phd in Human Development. She also has formerly worked at a large university in North Dakota and is currently a program director of a Marriage and Family grad program. She has also spent 10 years supervising and training therapy students helping families in ND. She also happens to be a single parent, and a queer woman. While people like her contribute to the well-being of ND families, it is unfortunate that she and others are still targets when it comes to their own families. While there has been rejection, I chose K because she is a queer woman and I knew she would never reject a child.

At this time I would like to share a photo of K and V. She is one of the most caring parents I would ever care to meet. She has been an excellent and nurturing parent to my daughter. She has been caring toward myself during this entire process. But despite how well-rounded she is, this was a huge financial strain for her, including having to take out a third mortgage on her home. I myself was still left with a \$3000 medical bill due to adoption laws limiting the adoptive parent's ability to offer any assistance.

To not have the financial strain attached to something that is already emotionally difficult like adoption should be something that is offered to all families considering adoption, biological parents and any potential adoptive parents regardless of marital status, gender identity or sexual orientation. I would find it equally objectionable if persons were excluded based on a particular religious belief.

I believe that my testimony proves my support of providing financial assistance to the adoptive and biological parents, but find the exclusionary terms unwarranted. I believe removing those

conditions will actually expand the amount of adoptions we will see and provide a better quality of life for all children and potential children.

I respectfully urge the Committee to return this bill to the sponsors for revision before recommending that the bill be passed.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Dill