

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 Sarah Pellerito, and I was a surrogate for my sister and brother-in-law Peter and Aubrey Gojcaj in 2022. I gave birth to my niece on January 25, 2022. This letter is meant to inform you why Michigan needs to update its parentage law from the perspective of a surrogate.

Due to complications during my sister's labor and delivery with her daughter, Iris, in 2018, she had to have an emergency hysterectomy to save her life. Because of this, my sister and brother-in-law were unable to give Iris a sibling, despite having already created embryos while trying to conceive their first child. I volunteered to be their surrogate to grow their family in the fall of 2020 though I first had to process some reservations that I had regarding the outdated surrogacy laws in Michigan in order to go forward. Updating and clarifying these laws would alleviate the stress for the surrogate and intended parents, and ensure the child is born with vital protections. If Aubrey and Peter were not granted parental rights of their baby, our families would have all been negatively affected.

My husband and I would have had to take care of the baby emotionally and financially, which would have put a fiscal and mental strain on us. Having my niece in my home, keeping her for a period, and then giving her to her rightful parents would have been confusing for my children, due to the bond that they would have created with her, and not understanding why I carried my niece, brought her home, and then gave her away. If parental rights were not

granted to my sister and brother-in-law before I gave birth to my niece, this would have been extremely difficult for their daughter as she would have already bonded more with me.

Most of all, if my sister and brother-in-law were not granted parental rights, this would be traumatizing for them. After all the heartache, emotional distress, and financial obligations, they would then not be able to bond with their daughter as they should. They would not have been able to explain to their then 3-year-old first-born daughter why her baby sister is not home with them, bonding as a family. Updating these laws would alleviate the stress for the surrogate, intended parents, and the baby. Updating Michigan's statutes ensures that all parties involved in the surrogacy process are protected, the parents, the surrogates, and the children.

In conclusion, not updating the surrogacy laws in Michigan creates uncertainty and traumatizes so many parties. Please act now to pass this bill so that Michigan can improve laws to increase the likelihood that more parents can have the families that they so badly wish for and protect our children. Thank you for your time, and I hope that the Michigan Family Protection Act is voted favorably out of committee.

Sara Pellerito