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PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

Exhibit No. Tom 5

Date 3-19-07

Bill No. HB 713

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Rose Timmer. I am a birthmother who relinquished my daughter in 2005 in the State of Montana. I am writing to give a birthmothers perspective on House Bill 713.

I would like to first address counseling. I received counseling for six months before I placed and have been seeing a grief counselor ever since placement. The adoptive family paid for counseling for the first year (that was all that could be legally enforced). It takes a much longer period to process the loss of a child and become settled with the decision. Most birthparents do not have the financial stability to for this regular monthly expense. Having counseling support for the first year is crucial, but that first birthday is also a monument that restarts the healing process. Without regular counseling for the past three years my mental stability, anger, grief and trauma over this event would be much more apparent in my life and probably control many aspects of it.

I placed my daughter because I wanted her to have a life that I was not able to give her at the time. This drive pushed me through college where I received a degree in December of 2006 because I never wanted to feel like the choice of giving up my child was in vain. Having a future beyond the life changing decision of selflessly giving up my child would have been less challenging with support. There are many birthmothers that do not have any support or the resources to make their lives better. The choice I made could not have been swayed by financial or tangible benefits. This was a voluntary decision that I made; not for myself, or the adoptive family, but for my daughter. There's nothing that you could ever do for me to compensate for the loss of my child.

Providing support to birthparents would aide them in following their goals and dreams after such tragedy rather than giving up because it would be easier. Single parents are provided financial, medical, and educational support for their decision of raising a child without a partner. I believe that often times this decision is not in the best interest of the child, rather the parent because it is easier. Providing birthparents with support could not be considered bribery (as argued by Lutheran Social Services), because if we are offered the same support as single parents than there are no benefits to either decision that are greater than the other.

Thank you for allowing me to express my views and background and for your consideration in this very sensitive matter.

Best Regards,

Rose Timmer
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February 18, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Brynn Scharfe and I relinquished my first-born child for adoption in the state of Montana in September of 2003. My purpose in writing this letter is to urge you to consider the positive implications of HB 713 for birthparents when deciding how you will vote on this bill. This is a testimony from a birthparent's point of view.

I believe that birthparents need to be able to look forward to a bright and fulfilling future in order to be able to move on from the loss and function better in society. One way this can be done is through higher education. When I went back to school after placing my child, I had something to look forward to. I saw a bright future in front of me, which helped mend my pain.

These days, people get scholarships and grants based on their race, income, athletic abilities, and, especially, single-parent status. I think that birthparents should have the same opportunities to get scholarships and grants. However, in my research, I found only one organization in the U.S. that offers scholarships to birthparents. The organization is small and they do not have the means to give many scholarships. This bill could potentially allow placement agencies to organize and provide scholarships through independent funding for the birthparents that need it the most.

I want to share a story with you. I was in a class three years ago and heard two classmates talking. One of the girls was a single mother. She was saying that she didn't care if she flunked the class because she would just re-take it. "The government pays for my school anyways, because I am a single mother," she declared. I was enraged! I had made a responsible decision in placing my child with a family who had the means to care for him and a two-parent home that I could not give him. That woman had no work ethic or gratitude for the fact that her school was being paid for times two, and I and my family had paid every cent for mine. I believe that birthparents deserve the same opportunity as single parents to earn degrees and add to society.

I know that opponents of this bill will argue that it could create loopholes in adoption agreements in relation to bribery. This is a valid point and definitely something to consider, but it is also something that can be avoided so long as agencies are careful. If the funding for assistance comes from private third-party donations and birthparents have participated in the required amount of counseling, the loophole would be diminished. We do not place our children for the benefits we will receive; if we wanted extensive benefits, we would just parent our children! It is doubtful that someone would relinquish a child in exchange for a little help to get her life back on track. In fact, the assistance given by the government for single-parenting is much more of a bribe for birthparents to keep their baby than for them to place it.

This bill will allow birthparents to receive help that they need in order to properly grieve, move on, and live a fulfilling life. Not only could it help with funding higher education, but also for grief counseling, job training, life skills, and many other things to help grieving birthparents get back on their feet. Thank you for taking the time to hear this testimony. Please vote yes on HB 713.

Thank you,
Brynn Scharfe