

Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice-Chair,
Members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Rachael Clairmont and I am testifying again in favor of House Bill # 243.

For the first 22 years of my life, I was subjected to verbal abuse and emotional manipulation from my biological mother. Because of these years of abuse, I formed an eating disorder, I used alcohol as a coping mechanism, and I considered suicide. I've spent the last 8 years in counseling trying to make peace with my biological mother's abuse, to learn healthy tools to live with the effects from the abuse, and to grow a new appreciation for my stepmom, who stepped into the role of mom when I was 8.

For any abuse victim, a major part of their recovery is taking back their control. For me, that was asking my stepmom to adopt me to ensure that my abuser no longer had her parental rights to make major life decisions for me on my behalf. You can imagine the punch to my gut when I learned I couldn't do this without my abuser's permission. Let that sink in. I've spent 8 years in counseling to recover from 22 years of abuse and now the last piece of the puzzle to my recovery is in the hands of my abuser.

Now, let me be abundantly clear. The decision to call another person "mom" and make it official by law is not made lightly. It's a devastating reminder that the person who was supposed to love me unconditionally was the same person who chipped away at my psyche and made me believe I wasn't worth a dime on this earth.

So I sit here today, now as a 30-year-old, asking you to take that piece of the puzzle out of her hands and put it back in mine. Put it back in my hands so that I can fully heal from that abusive chapter of my life. Put it back in my hands so that I never need to worry if my abuser will have any say over my future children's life decisions should anything happen to my husband and myself. Take that control that parental abusers have over their victims and give it back to the victims so they can have a shot at a fulfilled life with full autonomy.

Thank you.