

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your time and I am honored to be here and to have the ability to speak with you on this important issue.

I also want to thank you for your hard work last year and unanimously voting in favor of this bill.

In 1996 my daughter's birth mother and I separated and eventually divorced 2 years later in 1998. Shortly after separating, the court awarded me physical custody of both my daughters who were 2 & 7 years old at the time. At final divorce, the courts continued this and awarded me as the primary physical custodial parent. This never changed.

Once my daughters were in their teens, the time that they spent with their birth mother was further reduced at both my daughters' requests. The environment at their birthmother's location was not healthy and was mentally abusive. Neither them, their homework or after school activities were ever a priority.

Other than this testimony today and the testimony from last year, I have never spoken publicly about the mental abuse that their birthmother caused my two daughters. She is a narcissist and everything revolves around her. It is rare for her to take responsibility for her inactions or wrongdoing, and it is always someone else's fault. Many times, she made my daughters feel guilty and that it was their fault.

This left my daughters with feelings of guilty for things that had nothing to do with them and has caused them some very difficult and almost tragic emotional problems through their lifetime. Neither one of them have any contact with her and for one of my daughters, it has been years.

Thankfully my wife Barbara, here with us today, came into our lives. She chooses to step into my daughter's lives and help them as any great mother figure would. She has been perfect for them, given them the motherly love and guidance that any great mother would do. She still fulfills that role today.

Rachael made the decision a few years ago as an adult in her late 20's that she would like Barb to adopt her. Her reasoning was that Barb has always been her mother, and she wants to make it official.

We found out that Maryland law, as currently written, does not allow this without the consent of the birth mother. Rachael's birth mother said she will not consent to the adoption.

The courts saw fit on two separate occasions to award custody of my daughters to me and not their birth mother. When a person reaches the age of being a responsible adult, they should be allowed to make the decision about who is legally their parent. This adult, my daughter Rachael, college graduate, successful in her professional, married, home owner and all around great person, is unable to break the abusive last bit of hold that her birth mother has over her. The current law as written still grants the birth mother the ability to have one last grip on my daughter's life.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any of your questions.