
Kerry Schriefer

1132 Castanea Ct.
Lutherville, MD 21093

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Testimony in favor of HB 482 “Donor-conceived Persons and Families of Donor-conceived Persons Protection Act”

Thank you to the committee members for your time and consideration of HB 482.

I'd like to start by having you consider the answers to the following questions.

Have you ever had a doctor ask you about your family medical history? Have you ever had a doctor ask about your family medical history on behalf of your child? Do you or anyone in your family have any medical or psychological diseases or disorders? And finally, why do you think it's important that at every doctor's appointment or hospital stay, that these questions are asked about your family medical history?

My name is Kerry Schriefer, and I'm a lifelong Maryland resident. Last year, at the age of 40, I discovered that my Dad was not my biological father, and that I was conceived via sperm donor.

My entire world was turned upside down. The emotional trauma of finding this out still haunts me to this day. My Dad who raised me has passed away, and I had to mourn his death all over again, and mourn the reality of my own life that I thought I knew. I began questioning my entire life and the face staring back at me in the mirror... where did I come from, why was I lied to my entire life, and who was my biological father? Strangers passed by on the street suddenly became potential relatives in my mind, as I questioned how many siblings I could have and where they are.

In 1981, when I was conceived in a doctor's office in Maryland, my parents were given very little information about who my donor would be. They were told that he would probably be a medical student, and they would try to match a few physical characteristics to my Dad who raised me. That was it.

I have spent most of the last year desperately searching for any genetic relatives on my paternal side. My and my family's health is extremely important to me. I make sure that my children and I go to the doctor for regular checkups, exercise and eat a healthy diet. After I found out that I was donor conceived I had to inform all of my medical providers that they needed to delete the entire paternal side of my medical file. I was unknowingly giving

false information for 40 years. I also had to delete the paternal Grandparent's side of both of my young children's medical files.

As I'm sure you know, not having an accurate medical family history can be a difference between life and death.

My brother was also conceived via sperm donor. Through DNA testing online, we later found out through opposing matches that he had a different donor than I had, which sadly meant we are actually only half-siblings. My brother started matching with several siblings on these DNA sites, and is up to seven so far and counting. There could be many more, but unfortunately the lack of regulation leaves it a mystery. He did find out, after contacting his new half-sister that shares his same donor, that when he attended a small college in Maryland of about 1,200 students, that his half-sister was attending the same college at the exact same time that he did. Think about that for a moment. The risk of accidental incest as a result of the lack of regulations with gamete donation is real.

There are thousands of us.

When donor conceived children are conceived, there are rights and considerations for the prospective parents and the donor, but none for the children that they are to create. We are asking for the same simple rights as everyone else. To know of our origins, to know our family medical history, and to know how many siblings we have.

I understand that it's too late for me. But it's not too late for the younger and future generations of donor conceived people. As you consider the answers to my questions in the beginning of my statement, I urge you to please also consider support for HB 482.

Thank you,

Kerry Schriefer