

Rachael Bennett – Favorable Witness Testimony
HB0214 Family Law – Adoption of an Adult
Delegate Boyce

Written Testimony Submitted: 1/23/24
To be orally presented in person: 1/25/24 @ 1:00 pm

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 7 years in counseling trying to make peace with my biological mother's abuse, learning healthy tools to live with the effects from the abuse, and growing 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 7 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, as a 29-year-old adult, asking you to take that piece of the puzzle out of her hands and put it back in mine. Take the 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.

###