February 26, 2020

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Committee on Judiciary
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
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Testimony regarding H 7541 – The Rhode Island Uniform Parentage Act

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

Rhode Island is in urgent need of comprehensive statutory reform to protect all children. A child’s legal relationship to their parent or parents – parentage - is critical to their well-being and healthy development. From that core legal relationship, numerous rights and responsibilities flow including the right to care, financial support, medical insurance, decision making, and beyond.

Right now, in Rhode Island, there are significant holes in protections for children. Rhode Island parentage law is over 40 years old and is among the oldest in the country, along with Mississippi and Kentucky. The current statutory scheme is outdated, unconstitutional and leaves children and families vulnerable. For example, Rhode Island law treats certain unmarried couples differently, has no protections for children born through assisted reproduction and has no protections for people building families through surrogacy. Further, in the absence of clear statutory direction, the only path to parentage for many is adoption in the Family Court, a process in which LGBTQ families face unnecessary barriers to protecting their children.

It is the role of the legislature to pass protections that ensure that all Rhode Island children have equal access to the security of legal parentage. We need comprehensive reform that is best practice and that recognizes, respects and protects all of the diverse families that enrich this state.

On behalf of RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, I support comprehensive parentage reform that is best practice and based on model legislation, including the Uniform Parentage Act 2017 and the Vermont Parentage Act 2018. With amendments as proposed by GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), I support H 7541, the Rhode Island Uniform...
Parentage Act (RIUPA). H 7541 goes a long way towards providing the protections we need for Rhode Island children in our law to ensure children have equal access to the security of legal parentage. With these straightforward amendments, H 7541 will ensure the law is clear, comprehensive, and that no children are left out or treated differently. I am grateful to the bill’s sponsors and to this committee for working hard to ensure we can pass best-practice legislation this session to correct the discrimination and gaps in protections so many families now face.

RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association represents the millions of women and men in the U.S. with the disease of infertility and the more than 23,000 Rhode Islanders struggling with this disease. Statistics show that one in eight individuals or couples have trouble getting pregnant or sustaining a pregnancy. Infertility cuts across socioeconomic levels, and all racial, ethnic and religious lines. RESOLVE helps people with infertility pursue medical treatment, adoption, third party reproduction, and all other family building options.

The status quo is harming Rhode Island children and families, and it is time for our law to provide clear and equal paths to establishing parentage. Our children deserve the security that comes with a stable and legally protected parental relationship. Adopting best practice legislation will ensure Rhode Island parentage law is constitutional and fair, and will provide equality, security, and stability for children and parents.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony regarding H 7541 and proposed amendments.

Sincerely,

Barbara Collura
President and CEO