

May 14, 2019

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
New York State Senate  
Legislative Office Building, Room 907  
Albany, NY 12247

Speaker Carl Heastie  
New York State Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 932  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

Central to our Jewish faith tradition is family. From birth to Bar / Bat Mitzvah, marriage, and burial, at the core of most of the major Jewish life cycle events is family. As clergy, we know the visceral, central importance for so many of our congregants of building a family. We've also known the heartbreak and pain endured by couples and individuals who have wanted to have children but, because of medical challenges or because they are members of the LGBTQ community, have found it difficult or impossible. The evolution of medical technology has been a great blessing for these individuals, giving new options for so many.

Unfortunately, New York's laws lag behind many other states in easing the burden for families who rely on medical advances to become parents. Current New York law is overreliant on biology rather than intention to determine parental rights. Under current law, non-biological parents are too often subjected to intrusive, expensive and time-consuming processes to secure legal parenthood. Additionally, New York is one of only two states that bans and criminalizes the practice of surrogacy, forcing many families for whom that is the only option to have a biological child to go through the hardship of working with a surrogate in another state.

We are proud to stand with our friends in the LGBTQ and infertility advocacy community in support of the Child-Parent Security Act (S2071/A1071). Sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman and Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, it would modernize New York law to better support individuals who depend on medical advances to have families. It would ensure that intended parents who enlist the help of a third-party to conceive their child have a secure legal relationship with their child from the moment of birth. It would also legalize gestational surrogacy (where the surrogate is not genetically connected to the child because she did not contribute her egg), provided that the arrangement follows "best practices" in the field that protect the interests of the surrogate, intended parents, and child.

To many of our congregants, raising children and building a family is the most joyful and meaningful pursuit in their lives, core to their religious or spiritual fulfillment. We urge you to make it easier for more New Yorkers to do so by passing this important piece of legislation this year.

Sincerely,

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Rabbi Lester Bronstein (White Plains)  
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