January 23, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor, State of New York
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
New York State Capitol Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker, New York Assembly
New York State Capitol Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie:

As women who have chosen to become gestational surrogates, we want to thank you for your consideration of the Child-Parent Security Act, common-sense legislation included in Governor Cuomo’s budget proposal that is rooted in the shared experience of surrogates over the past 30 years. Our support for this legislation comes from our firsthand experience in enabling families in New York and elsewhere to have children of their own. There are few things as rewarding as seeing a parent hold a newborn baby for the first time and knowing that you brought that life into the world for them.

We have come to this issue from different backgrounds and perspectives, but we share the universal belief that everyone who dreams of having a family should be able to do so. Advances in medicine over the past three decades have made biological parenthood possible for so many who would never have been able to have children before – but science can only take us so far. For many hopeful parents, surrogacy is their only option.

To understand how we view our role as gestational surrogates (this means that we have no genetic relationship with the child), it’s helpful to understand how we chose this path. All of us are lucky to have families of our own. We know the incomparable joy that comes from raising children, and also know—from our experiences with intended parents—the deep pain that comes when you are told that parenthood isn’t possible for you.

The decision to serve as a surrogate is not one that any of us entered into lightly. We each researched the science and the legal guidelines, learned about the experiences of other surrogates, and thought deeply about the commitment and process involved. For us, it came down to giving the gift of life to people who want nothing more than to raise children of their own.

Not everyone understands the way surrogacy works today in the United States. For some, their notions of surrogacy are rooted in outdated practices, beliefs that were abandoned decades ago, or practices they have heard about that may take place in developing countries. Some even believe that gestational surrogacy is a potential evil to be foisted upon unaware or vulnerable women.
We want to dispel those myths. It’s important that people know that the primary motivation for each of us, and for all the surrogates we’ve come into contact with, is helping a family, not financial reward. Surrogacy today is a true partnership between the woman acting as surrogate, the intended parent(s), doctors and nurses, and the matching agency. We all get to know one another, see if we’re a good match, and then work together through this process of bringing a baby into the world.

Most of us maintain close relationships with the families that we worked with, exchanging holiday and birthday cards and sharing (at least through photographs) milestones with one another.

The Child-Parent Security Act includes comprehensive protections for women acting as surrogates, which, if passed, would establish the strongest protections for surrogates in the nation. The bill would enshrine into law a Surrogate’s Bill of Rights, protecting our right to make decisions regarding our health; ensuring that we have our own legal representation; and guaranteeing access to comprehensive health insurance, counseling, and life insurance.

It’s incomprehensible to us that a woman who wants to serve as a gestational surrogate and help a family bring a baby into the world, and who meets the rigorous screening process of surrogacy matching agencies to ensure suitability, would be prevented by state law from being able to do so. Whose interest is that serving? Certainly not that of prospective surrogates, nor of intended parents.

We understand better than anyone what it takes to serve as a surrogate – and what it means to families who rely on surrogacy to have children. On behalf of these families, we urge you to end New York’s ban and replace it with what would be the most supportive law in the country for both women acting as surrogates and intended parents.

Sincerely,

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<td>Jessica Konopski-Soto</td>
<td>East Brunswick, NJ</td>
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<td>Kelley Perry</td>
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