

MASSACHUSETTS PARENTAGE ACT COALITION



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Parents, Advocates, and Lawmakers Testify in Support of Strengthening Legal Protections for Children and Families

BOSTON - Families, legal advocates, lawmakers, and others testified in front of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary Tuesday, in support of the Massachusetts Parentage Act (MPA) [[Senate bill, S. 947](#)/ [House bill, H. 1713](#)]. The law would increase security for Massachusetts families by ensuring all children, including those born through assisted reproduction, surrogacy, or children born to non-marital or LGBTQ parents, have access to parentage, the legal status of the parent-child relationship, and the critical protections necessary for families to thrive.

"Massachusetts has fallen behind the rest of the country in ensuring parental laws reflect and include the diversity of modern-day families, including our LGBTQ+ families, and advances in science," said **Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell**. "This legislation would put us back on track by codifying legal protections for parents, regardless of their marital status, gender, or sexual orientation, or how their child was conceived. I strongly support the Massachusetts Parentage Act which will strengthen families, provide stability for our children, and advance reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights across the state."

The bill has bi-partisan support in the House and the Senate.

"Outdated parentage laws have deprived many children across Massachusetts of the security other families take for granted," said **Rep. Sarah Peake** (D-Provincetown). "By treating some children as lesser and unequal -- namely children born through assisted reproduction, children born through surrogacy, children born to non-marital parents, and children born to LGBTQ parents -- our state leaves children vulnerable and undermines

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their well-being. The time has come to update our laws and provide all families with the legal protections they deserve."

"This legislation is important to many children and families in the Commonwealth, including mine," **said Rep. Hannah Kane** (R-Shrewsbury). "One of my children identifies as a member of the LGBTQ community, and as she makes her way in life, I want to know that she will be able to build her family and raise her children in a state where they are protected, equally, from day one."

Massachusetts is the only state in New England with outdated parentage laws. Parentage is the legal status of the parent-child relationship which provides legal protections, such as custody and decision-making, and responsibilities, such as child support and health insurance.

"This bill is personal — LGBTQ+ families like mine face excessive and expensive hoops just to ensure our children have the security of legal parentage," **said state Senator Julian Cyr** (D-Truro). "Massachusetts has long been a leader in LGBTQ+ equity, yet we have been resting on our laurels when it comes to parentage. With unprecedented and alarming action in other states to strip away the rights of LGBTQ+ people and our families, the Commonwealth's outdated and heterocentric parentage laws put LGBTQ+ families at risk every day. The Massachusetts Parentage Act is urgently needed so that all children can benefit from the stability of a legal parent-child relationship no matter how they came to be in this world."

"No child in Massachusetts should be subjected to the uncertainty and hardship caused by the absence of clearly written laws and the inconsistency of court decisions in that absence," **said state Senator Bruce Tarr** (R-Gloucester). "Passing the Massachusetts Parentage Act will create clear legal pathways to establish parentage in an efficient and predictable manner that will benefit children and families."

The MPA would ensure parents in Massachusetts have the ability to provide health insurance, make medical decisions - including in an emergency - make school decisions, as well as decisions about custody and parenting time, inheritance, and designating their children as beneficiaries of social security benefits.

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Twenty years after Massachusetts became the first state to ensure LGBTQ equality in marriage, the Commonwealth's outdated laws still leave children of LGBTQ+ parents vulnerable.

“The security of legal parentage is critical for children’s wellbeing, yet Massachusetts currently operates an unconstitutional system that renders some children and families second-class outsiders,” **said Patience Crozier, Director of Family Advocacy for GLAD.** “For far too many families their only recourse is for parents to adopt their own children – a burdensome, slow, expensive and humiliating process that isn’t even accessible to all who need it. Without this law, children – particularly those of LGBTQ families – will remain vulnerable outsiders.”

“The world my children, 2 and 5 at the time, and I knew came crashing down when Massachusetts’ outdated parentage laws said I was not their parent,” **said parent Karen Partanen.** “They couldn’t understand why Mommy wasn’t there anymore. I spent three years and all my savings fighting to secure their equal rights through the courts. While I was eventually successful, seven years later, other children are still in limbo as other parents navigate years of family court, just to secure rights for their children that should be clear under our laws.”

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