Chairman Lesch and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Logan’s Law. My name is Davis Senseman, and I am a parent and lawyer from Minneapolis.

When my son was born in August of 2008, there was no way for my name to appear on his birth certificate except through adoption, because the state of Minnesota did not allow his mother and I to be married. The months between August when he was born and February when his adoption was final were as climactic and tiring as the first months of any family with a new baby, but I had the added worry of knowing that if anything happened to my son in those months before the adoption was final, I would likely be unable to be with him, as I was, in the eyes of this state and the country, a “legal stranger” to him. Despite my spending long nights up as he learned humans are not nocturnal animals, despite my willingly paying for the many things a newborn needs, I had absolutely no relationship to him before his adoption.

When my son was almost 5 years old, he and I stood on the steps of this building and celebrated the fact that same-sex marriage was now legal in Minnesota, and 2 years later, when he was 7, we celebrated as that became the law of the land across this country. My son will be 11 this summer, and despite all of these changes, despite Americans in general and Minnesotans in particular realizing that their marriages will not fall apart or somehow be lessened if families like mine are also recognized under the law, children like my son are still born as “legal strangers” to their loving parents because of the wording of this statute.

Oddly enough, this statute does provide a benefit to certain people. Attorneys who handle second-parent adoptions, which until recently included my firm. We are paid several thousands of dollars by loving married couples to file numerous filings with the court and take up valuable and limited court resources and time to ensure that the non-gestational parent is not, despite the legality of her marriage, a “legal stranger” to her child.

The judges who continue to hear these cases consistently apologize to the families for having to go through the process, with one recently commenting that the issue is “ripe for a 14th Amendment case against the state by effected families.” I urge you to use the power the people of Minnesota have trusted you with to avoid the need for such an expensive resolution and instead to do what this bill asks and amend the statute.

Finally, I would like to remind this committee that amending this statute could not only save the individual families that it effects money, but also the taxpayers of this state. Children born to families like mine and Logan’s have only one legal parent at birth. Parents like me and Logan’s non-gestational parent have to take the affirmative step of adopting our kids, and as I explained, that is an expensive and time-consuming process. If we were unable or unwilling to do this, we would continue to be legal strangers to these children, so if something were to happen to their gestational parents, the child could be left without a responsible adult, and could easily end up relying on the state for medical care, housing or other things children need. Voting to change this statute will be a vote to assure that kids like my son, kids like Logan, have two adults on the hook for their many expenses and needs from the moment of birth. For that and all the other reasons stated, I urge you to vote yes on Logan’s Law. I’m happy to take any questions you may have.