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Testimony of Robin Elizabeth Pope, Attorney - June 12, 2017

Senate Bill 512-A

SubCommittee Co-Chairs Steiner Hayward and Rayfield, and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means SubCommittee on Human Services: My name is Robin Pope. I am an attorney in private practice; my practice is limited to family formation law, including adoption, surrogacy and related matters. Over the past 30+ years I have represented birth parents, adoptive parents, adoption agencies, putative fathers, intended parents, and gestational surrogates. I am here to testify in support of SB 512-A.

My background includes: Membership since 1997 in the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and American Academy of Assisted Reproductive Technology Attorneys (where I am currently a Board Trustee), a national association of attorneys who practice, or have otherwise distinguished themselves, in the field of family formation law; longtime membership in the Oregon State Bar Family Law Section Standing Committee on Adoption and Assisted Reproductive Technology Law and several years as chair of that committee; many years of pro bono service to Oregon citizens as a Pro Tem Judge in Clackamas County Circuit Court (family law matters, including child support) and Washington County Circuit Court (small claims court); service on three Oregon Law Commission Work Groups (paternity, parentage and open adoption records); and service on Oregon DHS Work Groups to review and revise Oregon Administrative Rules regarding adoptions and adoption agencies.

I appreciate having the chance to appear in front of you to testify regarding SB 512-A and request that this statement be submitted for the record.

The Summary for SB512-A states: "Modify laws regarding establishment of parentage of a child".

Oregon's paternity/parentage laws were written at a time when it only took two to make a baby. Today there are 16 different ways make a baby. As currently written, our paternity/parentage laws do not always allow for the establishment of parentage, with its accompanying duty to support the child. Oregon needs to bring its paternity/parentage laws into the modern world and support all parents and their children.

The changes set forth in SB 512-A will modernize Oregon's paternity/parentage statutes, making them inclusive and providing recognition, clarity and protection for all parents and families. SB 512-A sets out the various ways in which parentage may be established. It will ungender our paternity/parentage statutes. It supports and bolsters a statutory scheme that will recognize that all parents have both rights and responsibilities, and that it is in the best interests of children to have legally recognized parents who have a duty to support their children. Children will benefit.

Based on my review of SB 512-A, and my experience in this area of law, it is my opinion that Oregon's citizens will be better served by a modern and inclusive approach to how parentage is established.

I encourage you to support SB 512-A and move it to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my input on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Robin Elizabeth Pope

Oregon Family Formation Lawyer