

Submitter:

Kelly Best

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB163

Hi, my name is Kelly Best from North Carolina. I am a donor conceived person, conceived using anonymous donor sperm in 1992, testifying in favor of SB 163 in Oregon. I believe Oregon can lead the way in affecting change across the country and I admire you for this bill.

I am submitting this statement for the record.

Let me tell you how open identity at 18 would have changed my life. The donor, my genetic father, donated sperm from ages 18-20. The donations were frozen and I was born when he was 23. At that time he was still very healthy. By the time I was 18, he had developed morbid obesity and other health issues. This would not have been in his original clinic records that he left when he was a spry young donor, but it would've been useful to know. I've struggled with my weight my whole life and never knew why. I also struggled with my mental health in my teens and beyond. After connecting with the donor's family I learned that my genetic father, genetic grandfather, and genetic great grandfather all had the same mental health disorder. Knowing this genetic link was crucial in getting my own diagnosis and treatment. Finally at age 30 I was able to find peace. Imagine how much more I could have done if I had the information to get the correct diagnosis and treatment earlier, like at age 18. Learning about the genetic predispositions that showed up later in his life helped my life make more sense. There's this idea that donors are healthy and will be around a long time. That wasn't the case for me. The donor died when I was 25 and he was 48. He died of glioblastoma multiforme, a stage IV astrocytoma, a terrifying brain tumor. I'm thankful that I'm able to know and share this potentially life saving information with my doctors. Donors are not blank slates. Yes there are genetic tests that will tell you what is in your genetic code, but knowing how those genes activated and manifested in your living breathing genetic family members is worth its weight in gold. Medical histories are a basic human right. Lastly, commercial DNA tests have made donor anonymity a thing of the past and a false promise. I found my genetic father by connecting with cousins on DNA sites, even though he wasn't on the sites himself. He was overjoyed to be found. He expressed he didn't feel properly prepared by the bank for the full implications of being a donor, that he would be a genetic father to so many people. Prepare your donors, let them know explicitly that they are playing a part in creating real human beings. I believe transparency in the form of open-ID at 18 helps drive this point home. Thank you for your time. Kelly.