

Submitter:

Scott Weber

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB163

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

As a lifelong Oregon resident, and as a former anonymous sperm donor (1987-'89), I am providing my testimony to urge your YES vote on SB163. The language of this bill, including its essential provision regarding donor identity disclosure, is thoughtfully and expertly written and provides vital protections for donor conceived individuals. SB163 ensures the right of adult donor-conceived children to access vital information about their genetic origins and, potentially, family medical histories and heritage.

The language of SB163 accords with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the UN in 1989. It upholds the best interests of children, including donor-conceived children. The United States is among 196 countries who've signed onto the UNCRC and its enforceable articles, but the U.S. is the only UN member-state to not have yet ratified it. Notably, the UNCRC addresses identity in ARTICLE 8: Every child has the right to their identity, which includes their family relationships and ethnicity. "Where a child is deprived of one or more elements of their identity, the state will act to re-establish them."

In 1987, while residing in Portland, my partner and I welcomed our first-born into our lives. A friend of my partner, who'd been a sperm donor, encouraged me to become a donor at a local fertility clinic. Over a period of two years, and with an abiding sense of humility, I donated sperm anonymously. Eventually, the fertility lab staff told me that two children had been born as a result of my "selfless" donations. Though happy to hear this news, I felt dismay over the likelihood I'd never get to know these children, nor they get to know me as their biological father — and neither would the children I raised. Back then, I hadn't anticipated ubiquitous DNA testing.

In recent years, my children and I, as well as extended family members, have made wonderful connections with four adult donor-conceived children. With open hearts, we've embraced each other as a family. We wish this had occurred years earlier, with an easier pathway.

Our first connection was with a 25 year-old woman who, upon turning 18, was told by her mother that she was conceived with help from an anonymous donor. The second and third involved "DC kids" in their late-20's whose origin story had been withheld by their parent(s) — that is, until curiosity about family heritage led to a DNA test reveal. By their accounts, this was both a wonderful and terrible way of finding out, especially after so many years in the dark. Fortunately, my DNA profile provided contact details

and encouragement. Unfortunately, this path to stumbling upon “long lost family” is uncommon. The fourth connection, two years ago, involves a 35 year-old from Michigan who always knew of her origins. Inexplicably, both she and her mother were told by the fertility clinic that I had died soon after donating. She’d no expectation of finding me, and quite an emotional reaction when the DNA results posted.

Three of my “DC kids” are medical professionals and are aware of the implications of having missing or inaccurate family medical histories on record. Three were raised as an “only child” and would’ve loved to have known their half-siblings, grandparents and relations much earlier in life. The denial of access to basic information, and denial of the right to personal choice, impacts lives,

Oregon should protect the rights of children to know of their biological parents. The fertility industry, largely unregulated, has a responsibility to keep accurate records, faithfully report identifying information, and treat children as human beings and not commodities. Gamete donors carry a responsibility for the best interests of the child: to be named.

SB163 provides a sensible, secure information bank. Please stand with the donor-conceived and their families.

Sincerely —

Scott Weber