

Testimony for Adoption Hearing-December 13, 1999 1:00 P.M.

Hi, my name is Melanie Miller. My husband, Michael, and I live in York Haven, York County. Last November, we heard through mutual friends of a baby, who was to be born in April of this year. We were very excited because after many years of infertility trials and tribulations, we were in the midst of trying to decide whether to adopt or not. My husband has an adopted daughter from a previous marriage. The adoption was successful, although it took a year and a half to finalize. Needless to say my husband was very reluctant to go through the adoption process again after experiencing this very long "at risk" period. Even so, we put the risks aside and proceeded with the adoption process for this yet unborn baby that we hoped would soon be our child.

In February of this year, our attorney drew up a legal agreement stating our intentions to adopt the baby. Despite any anxieties we may have felt, we proceeded to make preparations for the baby just as any expectant couple would. Our dreams came true on May 2nd when we received our beautiful two-day-old baby girl whom we named Mikayla.

The arranged adoption of Mikayla was "closed" preventing us from knowing what transpired but our dreams quickly vanished when she was taken from us after only two weeks. What I do know is that the birth parents were unwed, in college, unemployed and the birth mother changed her mind. That was the beginning of a nightmare that continues to affect not only myself and my husband but also our families, friends, and especially my thirteen-year-old stepdaughter. Losing Mikayla was the most devastating experience of our lives even after only two weeks.

Placing a baby for adoption has to be one of the most difficult decisions one would have to make. I have the utmost respect for birth parents that make that decision, but for the child's sake once the decision is made it should be clearly defined and final. An adopted child deserves to know who his or her parents will be without the chance of his or her life being interrupted weeks, months or years later. Adoption is a decision that affects many people and a decision that should not be taken lightly. Clearly stated consents signed after 72 hours should be irrevocable or a revocation period certainly limited to no more than ten days.

Had our birth parents been offered adoption related counseling, our adoption may have been different. An adoption agency could have provided these services and we would not have felt so helpless and vulnerable. Adoption counseling may have helped the birth mother deal with the loss that she felt, with her vulnerability, and with the reasons she chose to place her baby for adoption. That could have made the difference in our situation.

This experience has had a huge impact on us. No words can describe the feeling I had when I first held Mikayla in my arms. We were so looking forward to nurturing her, caring for her, providing for her, raising her, teaching her, and above all, loving her.

Mikayla was such a precious gift to us, so pure and innocent. Even though she was with us for only a short time, she took a big chunk of my heart with her when she had to go. It was a heart wrenching feeling in some ways like a death. We were forced to go through the grieving process that hurts to this day and probably will for a long, long time.

In the meantime, with a whole nursery full of baby things, we are very hesitant about pursuing another adoption. We don't know if we will choose to risk another disruption, with the present status of the Pennsylvania Adoption Law. We ask that you consider the proposed adoption reform legislation so that other families and children may benefit from the many positive aspects of adoption.

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