

To: House / Senate Tax Committee
Subject: HB2757

We are John and Sonja Schibi and we currently reside in Parsons, Kansas. I was born and raised in Parsons and am a 6th generation Kansan. Sonja was born and raised in South Dakota but has lived in Kansas for the last 16 years. Growing up in a large family (I am the oldest of 11 children) there was never a dull moment or much silence. When Sonja and I started dating she was thrown into this chaos, and she loved it.

Needless to say, when we were married in 2012 we both had aspirations to have a big family. Our parents instilled in us the value of hard work, service to others, importance of family, and of course our faith in God and these were the values we wanted for our children.

However, year after year went by with no children. After many doctor's visits and tests we learned it would be difficult for us to conceive a child. In 2016 we decided to look into adoption. We remember being overwhelmed with the financial cost of adoption. After many prayers and emotional conversations, we decided to pursue adopting a child. The process was not easy as we talked with three different adoption agencies before being introduced to Julie Samaniego, the woman who ran Circle of Love Maternity Home, a non profit organization. The level of compassion and support they provided to the birth parents and the adoptive couples was something we hadn't experienced with the other adoption agencies

In March of 2018, we were matched with a birth mother through Circle of Love. However, the birth mother had already contracted with an agency and the adoption would go through that agency. Circle of Love took care of the that birth mother. Julie took her to doctor's appointments and provided her with housing and proper living needs. She arranged for us to be at doctor's appointments and kept a line of communication between us and the birth parents. Our daughter Mary was born on May 20th, 2018 and we finalized her adoption on July 26th, 2018.

Now for the cost involved in that adoption. Expenses included the cost of a Home Study, agency application fees, agency placement fees, matching fees, attorney fees, as well as medical and travel expenses. The adoption ended up costing us close to \$40,000. We refinanced our house and emptied our savings to pay the bills. The majority of that went to the attorney and her Adoption Agency while Circle of Love collected only the reimbursement of the birth mothers living expenses. Since that adoption of our daughter, we have worked with Julie at Circle of Love to adopt our son Sean and our daughter Josephine. The only way we were able to afford this was by working with Circle of Love and a new Attorney who truly helps with adoptions out of love for the adoptive couples and birth parents.

The Federal and State adoption tax credits have been helpful to us, but we do feel that at the State level Kansas has the opportunity to become a national leader in promoting adoption and building strong families that will contribute to future productive citizens of Kansas.

Respectfully,
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