

# THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

March 3, 2017

**Re: House Bill 159**

Domestic Relations; adoption; substantially revise general provisions

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to you regarding House Bill 159 which addresses domestic relations, adoption and substantially revises general provisions. Since 1996, The Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI) has worked to improve the lives of children and families across our country through research, education and advocacy that have led to better laws, policies, practices and perceptions. To achieve our goals, we investigate the issues of greatest concern to first/birth parents, adopted persons, adoptive/foster families, the people who love them and the professionals that serve them. We then determine best practices and offer policy recommendations working with a broad array of partners in educational efforts and advocacy campaigns.

We are grateful for your attention to issues that impact members of the adoption community as well as to those who may be considering adoption for their unborn child. One provision of this bill though leaves us with significant concern. Our understanding of the current law in Georgia is that a parent who wishes to relinquish their parental rights to adoption has the right to revoke that decision within ten days of the formal signing of surrender documents. This is an important provision that currently exists in Georgia law. However, HB 159 includes a provision which would alter the existing law by allowing a parent to waive the right to a revocation period, which raises a variety of concerns.

DAI has [conducted research](#) specific to the experiences of first/birth parents and expectant parents. Based on this body of work, it is critical that ample protections are in place for such a significant and life altering decision. Given the substantial emotional effect of giving birth to a child, combined with the physical impact of this experience, including resultant hormonal variations, the interval after giving birth is a critical timeframe to ensure a parent who is considering adoption continues to be fully informed of all of their options, is aware of the lifelong impact of their decision, and is ultimately able to give informed consent. Allowing a ten-day revocation period ensures necessary protections and an ethical process for surrendering parents as well as for intended adoptive parent(s).

Given the high levels of stress that surround the actual birth of the child, combined with the weight of a decision to permanently relinquish parental rights to a child, many parents may not fully understand the magnitude of waiving the critical protection of a ten-day revocation

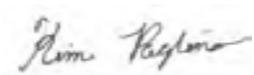
period. For these reasons, it is vital that the ten-day revocation period remain intact with no option for a birth parent to waive that fundamental right.

We hope this information proves useful as you deliberate legislation that impacts parents who are considering adoption. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'April Dinwoodie', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

April Dinwoodie Chief Executive  
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Paglino', written in a cursive style.

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