



RAISE Children: Protecting New York Families

RAISE Children (S.9748/A.4880) is sponsored by Senator Cooney & Assemblymember González-Rojas.

BILL SUMMARY

The **Rights Act Initiating Security and Equality for Children (RAISE Children)**

aims to protect all New York families by:

- Creating a streamlined **confirmatory adoption process** for people who are already parents under New York law
- Permitting courts to grant **multi-parent adoption petitions**
- Establishing clear criteria for various **presumptions of parentage**
- Codifying a New York court's ability to recognize that **children sometimes have more than two parents**

Without parentage secured by court order, families can face discrimination based on the circumstances of a child's birth, the identities of their parents, or the composition of their families. **RAISE Children** addresses this inequity by making adoption and parentage judgments more accessible for all New York families, including families created through assisted reproduction, LGBTQ+ families, families in which a parent and child don't share a genetic connection, and families with more than two parents.



Want to learn more and get involved? Scan the QR code or visit familyequality.org/raise

WHY DO WE NEED RAISE CHILDREN?

New York's current adoption options are not a good fit for families created by assisted reproduction. By ensuring access to confirmatory adoption, RAISE Children allows parents to secure the protection of adoption without intrusive home studies, paperwork, or delays.

Current New York law can be read to limit adoption and legal parentage to two parents, leaving many children without protection. RAISE Children ensures that all parents can seek custody and adoption rights and changes the language from "either" parent to "any" parent, so courts can clearly recognize multi-parent families.

RAISE Children updates current New York law to remove stigmatizing terms like "legitimacy" and ensures that parents are recognized by care and intent, not simply marital status, by adopting a modern, yet proven framework for parental recognition.

RAISE Children also benefits New York courts. Clearer laws lead to clearer guidance for courts, resulting in consistency throughout the state and reducing appeals. Streamlined processes preserve court resources and promote judicial efficiency.

What is parentage?

Parentage is the legal relationship between a parent and child. From parentage, many rights and responsibilities flow, from everyday activities like school pickup and doctor's appointments to urgent needs like emergency medical care, custody and visitation if parents separate, and inheritance rights in the event of a parent's death.

What is confirmatory adoption?

In New York today, completing an adoption requires an expensive and intrusive process — even when a parent is adopting their own child. Confirmatory adoption is a widely supported, more streamlined process available in eight other states that would protect certain families formed through assisted reproduction.

Why do families need court orders if New York already recognizes them as parents?

In New York, when a child is born of assisted reproduction, the intended parents who consent to the assisted reproduction are legal parents under New York law. That's because of New York's CPSA — and it's great! But, given the patchwork of parentage laws across the U.S., many families choose to obtain a court order such as adoption to confirm parentage, because it must be recognized across state lines.

Can a child have more than two legal parents?

Yes, many children have more than two parents. Take, for example, a family touched by death or divorce, where stepparents have played a significant role in a child's life. For decades, courts and legislatures have acknowledged this reality by providing legal rights for third parents. This bill will give the courts clear authority to recognize all parents of a child and award custody to more than two parents when it is in a child's best interest to do so.

Love makes a family. Our laws should reflect that.

Carla's parents got divorced when she was just a baby, and her stepdad, Joel, has been a part of her life since she first learned how to walk. Carla loves all three of her parents — but without the protections of RAISE Children, New York courts might fail to recognize her relationships legally, which can cause trauma and harm.

Even though June's wife carried their daughter, June has been an active and loving parent from the very first visit to their fertility office. But without RAISE Children, she needs to budget and prepare for an intrusive, expensive process to secure an adoption order that names her a legal parent.

In these instances, and so many more, RAISE Children protects the many diverse ways that families show up in New York. **It's common sense: All New York children deserve the security of a legal parent-child relationship — no matter how they came into this world.**