

# KAREN'S STORY

MASSACHUSETTS  
PARENTAGE ACT  
COALITION



Karen went through an agonizing legal battle to ensure her parental relationship to her children—all because Massachusetts law did not explicitly ensure her parentage.

Karen and her former partner Julie lived together in Florida when they decided to have children together using assisted reproductive technology. When Julie became pregnant, both sides of the family were thrilled. Karen was present in the delivery room when “Jo” was born in 2008 and when “Ja” was born in 2012. She became “Mommy,” and Julie became “Mama.” Karen gave them each their first bath and was a parent to them in every way.

In Florida, adoption wasn’t available to Karen as the non-biological parent in the children’s early years. The couple ultimately moved back to Massachusetts with their kids. After 13 years together, including the shared parenting years of night feedings, annual checkups, and holidays and family gatherings, the couple separated.

Karen wanted to adopt her two children to provide them with stability and permanency. “I grew up in a large family, and that sense of family is what I wanted for my children,” said Karen. She also wanted her children to enjoy the same legal protections as other children.

Today, Karen shares her life with her partner Lisa, and the kids live with them 50% of the time. With the bitterness of Family Court behind them, Karen, Julie, and Lisa work together to make sure Jo and Ja have everything they need within a shared parenting schedule. Karen and Julie attend parent/teacher conferences together, stand on the sidelines together at sporting events, alternate parenting schedules to ensure it benefits the kids, and even spend time at the other’s house whenever the kids have something to share.

If Karen’s legal parentage were in place from the children’s birth, agonizing years in family court would not have been necessary. The children wouldn’t have worried for three years about whether they would ever see mommy again. Thousands of court dollars could have been saved for college funds for the kids instead of spent on legal fees.

“Because I wasn’t married and hadn’t adopted, the law said I was a legal stranger,” says Karen. “The road to becoming a full legal parent was very tough. Parents and children shouldn’t have to go through that. Children, in particular, shouldn’t suffer any uncertainty at all about who their parents are. Equality and security for children should be enshrined in Massachusetts law.”

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## Massachusetts Parentage Act S 1133 / H 1714

***The Massachusetts Parentage Act (MPA) will update Massachusetts’ outdated parentage law so that it is clear, equitable, and provides legal protection for all families, including LGBTQ+ families.***