

I was perusing submitted testimony this morning, and saw the piece regarding what is typically called "PAL" (Positive Adoption Language). I would like to speak about this from the perspective of current advocacy as led by adopted persons. PAL is a product of the adoption industry, and was created by facilitators, not adopted persons. Although I do agree with some of the terminology recommendations, I have profound disagreement with others, as they are terms/words that would diminish the lived experience of adopted persons, and places them under narratives that frequently do not reflect their true lives.

- "Former Family". I spoke about this in person, so won't belabor. But there is no such thing as a "former family". Even if legally severed, they are always "family". Please consider "biological family"

- "Forever Family": statistically this just doesn't always pan out. I had colleagues who were invited to the last State Department symposium on adoption (the first adoptees to actually be invited to the table at this event), and they were presented with a State Dept. Statistic saying that 20 percent of ALL kinds of adoptions end in disruption, meaning that the adoptee is re-homed or institutionalized before turning 18. This doesn't include the large numbers of adoptees who experience estrangement from all or part of their adoptive families as adults. Claudia, who will be speaking this morning, was an attendant and speaker at this event. Only the adoptee can claim "forever". "Forever Family" is a term borrowed from animal adoption. Adopted persons and adoption language should NEVER mirror language used regarding the care of animals and pets. Please consider "adoptive or adopting family"

- "WAS adopted". I AM adopted. It wasn't something that happened in the past, but something that I am always subjected to. If that were not the case, I would not have to testify to legislative bodies, begging for equal rights and access.

It is imperative that our society and culture move towards allowing adopted persons to lead in all aspects of conversations around adoption. This is one seemingly small way...but sometimes, language is everything. It is also imperative to point out that adoptees should have the freedom and autonomy to use whatever words they want regarding their own adoptions...without correction from "industry standards". We are human beings, not pets in need of rehoming.

Please add this to your posted testimony. Thank you!

Rebecca Dragon