



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

NOTRE DAME CENTER FOR ETHICS AND CULTURE

424 Geddes Hall
Notre Dame, Indiana
46556-4639 USA

O. Carter Snead
William P. and Hazel B. White Director
Professor of Law

tel (574) 631-9656
fax (574) 631-6290
email osnead@nd.edu

October 8, 2020

Dear U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Members:

I am writing in my personal capacity in support of my friend and Notre Dame colleague, Judge Amy Coney Barrett and her nomination to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Much has already been said (including by me) about Justice Barrett's uncommonly brilliant mind and achievement as a scholar, teacher, and federal judge. I would like to say a few brief words about a more personal matter, namely, the amazing and inspiring witness of Amy and her husband Jesse as *parents*. By way of background, my wife and I formed our own family through adoption and, as such, share a special connection to Amy and Jesse (along with the many other families in our community with sons and daughters who were adopted).

As my former mentor Dr. Leon R. Kass has said, a child is a gift to be welcomed and treasured. He or she is a "mysterious stranger to be welcomed and loved unconditionally." Parenting, at its best, embodies this good of radical hospitality and love. This can be seen in a very special and beautiful way with families formed by adoption. Adoption is the grafting of a child onto a new family tree, with connections stretching back in time to ancestors in the past and reaching into the future to relatives not yet born. While it begins in tragedy, with a child without biological parents willing or able to care for him or her, it is redeemed as a blessing, with the transformation of this child into a true son or daughter who is given a permanent place of belonging in a genuine family. As Gil Meilaender has noted, in adoption the bonds of love and shared history create family rather than those of mere biological connection. Theologian Russell Moore puts the point quite beautifully and succinctly: there are no "adopted sons and daughters," only "sons and daughters."

As parents of the amazing Vivian and JP, Amy and Jesse have modeled this love and devotion for everyone who has had the blessing of knowing this wonderful family. I offer this letter to make the brief but important point that Judge Barrett is not simply a brilliant jurist committed to fairness and the rule of law, but is a sterling inspiration to all of us who are parents, especially those whose families have been formed by adoption.

Sincerely,

O. Carter Snead
Director, de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture / Professor of Law
University of Notre Dame