

CBS Mornings

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: CBS News Investigations; Concerns About Commercial Surrogacy]

NORAH O'DONNELL: But we're going to begin this hour with a CBS News investigation into commercial surrogacy, where a woman carries and gives birth for someone else, in exchange for payment. While surrogacy can help build families, our investigation found some cases that raise serious concerns about whether the system has enough safeguards for the surrogate mothers and the children. Katrina Kaufman spoke to women demanding answers.

"JUDY": It's not fair because the baby didn't ask to be born into this.

KATRINA KAUFMAN: This woman, who we'll call Judy, is pregnant with someone else's child. She's a surrogate, and we're obscuring her identity as she speaks out for the first time about an experience she says has left her deeply conflicted.

"JUDY" [CRYING]: It worries me, and I try not to think about it because I get upset, and there's nothing I can do.

KAUFMAN: Judy says she initially looked forward to helping out a single dad and agreed to become his surrogate for \$65,000. Then she says her agency told her that they had just found out this single dad was also having children with 20 other surrogates.

"JUDY": I trusted this agency to kind of protect surrogates and, like, match them with people with good intentions.

KAUFMAN: The agency says it advised Judy to terminate the contract. Documents obtained by CBS News show that "Judy" is carrying a baby for Chinese billionaire Xu Bo, a video game executive. He recently posted this photo on social media showing more than 100 children. His company says a dozen were born through surrogates in the U.S.

"JUDY": It's beyond something that you can prepare for.

KAUFMAN: The U.S. is the only developed country where commercial surrogacy is widely legal, but a year-long CBS News investigation found cases that, while not illegal, raise questions about how loopholes in the surrogacy industry are being exploited

ELIZABETH COOK [on CBS News 24/7, 07/17/25]: Police say 21 children, most born via surrogates, were pulled from a couple's 10,000-square-foot home.

KAUFMAN: Silvia Zhang and Guojun Xuan were arrested last year in California on allegations of child abuse. We found that the couple has had 25 children through surrogacy. We tracked

down 17 of their surrogates, including Maria Castellanos. [TO CASTELLANOS] What is that like to even process?

MARIA CASTELLANOS: I was in shock.

KAUFMAN [TO CASTELLANOS]: Who were you angry with?

CASTELLANOS: Everybody that was involved, everybody.

KAUFMAN: Zhang and Xuan have denied any wrongdoing, and their case is under investigation. The children born through surrogates, they remain in state care. Xu Bo did not respond to our interview requests. He has previously said that more children bring more blessing.

O'DONNELL: But this is really interesting. Why are these Chinese billionaires having up to 100 babies here in the United States? What's the goal?

KAUFMAN: Norah, that is the question that we've been looking into. The reality is that surrogacy is not legal in China, so they cannot do it there. Geographically, it makes sense for them to come to California, which has really become the hotbed for all of this. And out of — because of foreigners —

O'DONNELL: Because of no regulations or limited regulations?

KAUFMAN: — limited regulations, a lot of fertility clinics. Yeah, when it comes to regulations, the only place where an agency, for example, has to be licensed is New York. Across the country, a lawyer told us, basically, with \$300 and an LLC, someone can start a surrogacy agency.

NATE BURLESON: Really?

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: And that's the key — right — that the United States is the only developed country where commercial surrogacy is legal. All other countries don't have that. So, surrogacy is an important facet of people struggling with fertility issues. But when you make it a business, you get people that can exploit the loophole like that.

KAUFMAN: Exactly. And in our investigation, we were looking specifically into people who were using multiple surrogates —

O'DONNELL: Yeah.

KAUFMAN: — in a short period of time to have a lot of children, and through whistleblowers, we received documents where we saw the same names appearing over and over again. It's lawyers, it's doctors, it's fertility clinics, it's agencies. One lawyer had 25 surrogates she was dealing with for a single couple. So, essentially, this is all legal.

BURLESON: Exploiting it.

KAUFMAN: That's the problem. But there are real ethical and moral questions here.

O'DONNELL: Yeah. You should keep digging on this because I really want to know why do these billionaires want that many children?

DUTHIERS: What's the angle?

O'DONNELL: What are they planning to do with these children?

KAUFMAN: When it comes to Bo, he did also say that he is striving for the long-term development of the Chinese nation.

DUTHIERS: Hmm.

O'DONNELL: Of Chinese babies that have American citizenship. Okay.

BURLESON: Alright, Katrina, thank you.

KAUFMAN: Thank you.