

My name is Jane Servadio and I am here to speak about Bill # 624 -- An Act Providing Certain Adult Adopted Persons With Access to Parental Health Information and Information in Their Original Birth Certificates. I am the CT State Representative for the American Adoption Congress and a member of the CT Council on Adoption and am also a birthmother.

Some of you may not know that before 1975 adult adoptees had access to their original birth certificates, as did all other CT born adults. Several legislative changes eliminated that right along with access to genetic and medical history. All states except Kansas and Alaska have closed access to OBCs at one time or another. Recently 10 states have been reopened and access bills are currently being decided on in more than 15 others. Opponents claim that birthmothers do not want to be found. A survey of all adoption agencies in the country who do searches shows that more than 93% of birthmothers are happy to be found. The charge that access will increase abortions because potential birthmothers do not want to be found by the adoptee in the future is also false. Statistics from the Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood show that a large number of women having abortions stated that adoption was not an option because they could not emotionally cope with the guilt of having their child out in the world and not knowing where he is or who is caring for him. They felt abortion would be easier to cope with emotionally. Both organizations agree that fear of a possible lack of confidentiality of adoption records or of the possibility that their child would search them out in the future has never been mentioned by any of their clients or survey respondents.

The current trend in adoption all over the country is to eliminate secrecy because of the problems it has caused for adoptees, birthparents and adoptive parents. Prospective birthmothers now meet prospective adoptive couples and chose the family they feel would be best to raise their child. Together they decide the level of contact that works best for them. The child will always know the birthmother and know that she loves him, thus eliminating the sense of alienation and abandonment that adoptees grow up with in the best of adoptive homes. These are the feelings that drive adoptees to search for their birth families later in life. The reality is that the adoptee has two sets of parents and knowing his ancestry is fundamental to establishing his sense of identity.

Although this bill has been proposed by the Select Committee on Children, it has nothing to do with children -- all parties involved are adults. By the time this prospective and not retrospective bill, if passed in this form, goes into effect it will be meaningless because most of the adoptees who are then turning 21 will have been brought up in an open adoption and will have no need for it. Those who are older and not affected at all by the bill will be of an age where their birthparents may no longer be alive.

Adoptees are the only people in the country who are unable to get their true birth certificates and there is no reason for it. We are hoping the Legislature will right this wrong.

Thank you,

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