



February 7, 2011

Support SB 65: A Bill of Access to Benefit Adopted Adults

Dear Elizabeth Giannaros:

The American Adoption Congress, founded in 1978, is a national organization committed to adoption education and reform. We promote public policies that encourage humane, honest adoption practices that are sustained by data and research. The right of adopted adults to their original birth certificate is a cause that we support, asking that the Select Committee on Children consider passage of SB 65 that would improve and build on current Connecticut laws concerning adoption.

SB 65 is research-based and evidence-based, reflecting how adoption Best Practices and policies have long passed the need for anonymity that could never be guaranteed. The bill also reflects that no harm has resulted in any state where access has been enacted. As researcher Elizabeth Samuels will attest on Wednesday at the Connecticut State House in the Old Judiciary Room (see flyer), no promise of anonymity to birthmothers exists in any state's relinquishment or legal paperwork, including Connecticut's. If birthmothers were truly guaranteed anonymity, a legal protection would have been ensured through documentation presented to them at the relinquishment that required their signatures. Birth mothers have the same protections under the law as all other citizens including the right of privacy. Privacy does not equal secrecy.

Eleven states are currently trying to reform archaic statutes regarding the right of adopted adults to their own information. The reality is that access does not harm any party. Since the law changed in Oregon, over 10,000 adopted adults have received their birth certificates with no ill effects. The story is the same in all ten states with access where no family disruptions, declines in adoptions or other adverse effects have been reported.

http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/reform_adoption_data.php

SB 69 will restore the privilege of adopted adults to access their identifying information, thus granting them rights equal to those enjoyed by all other citizens of Connecticut. I urge your support of this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Martin Mason
Legislative Committee Chair
612-746-5127

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ACCESS CONNECTICUT

Present:

Elizabeth Samuels

Professor, University of Baltimore School of Law

Adoption, Identity, and Confidentiality:

The History of Closed Records

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

2:00-4:00PM

**Old Judiciary Room Connecticut Statehouse,
Hartford, Connecticut**

Currently, when children are adopted, they are usually issued new birth certificates in which the names of adoptive parents replace the names of birth parents. Copies of their sealed original birth certificates have been unavailable to adult adoptees in most states for varying numbers of years. Connecticut sealed original birth certificates to adoptees in 1974. But recently many states around the country have considered, and some have passed, legislation restoring adult adoptees' right to receive uncertified copies of their original birth certificate upon request. New Hampshire (SB 335) and Maine (LD 1804) have passed legislation restoring those rights to all their adult adoptees. Against the backdrop of these bills, this talk will discuss the surprising, often misunderstood history of adoptee birth records and the significance of that history with respect to adoptees' rights and birth parents' concerns.

Elizabeth Samuels received her J.D. from the University of Chicago. She is the author of an influential article in the Rutgers Law Review on the history of sealing adoptees' birth records, has written about laws governing mothers' consent to the adoption of their newborns, and is currently doing research on the surrender documents birth mothers signed during the last century. She has made presentations at national conferences on adoption, testified in state legislative hearings about adoption law bills, worked on projects with the Donaldson Adoption Institute, and received the "Angel in Adoption" award of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption of the U.S. Congress.

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