



**Catholic
Charities**
Atlanta

Providing Help. Creating Hope.

February 8, 2012

Senator David Shafer
421-F State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Re: HB 748

Dear Senator Shafer;

I'm reaching out to you as the previous adoption director of Catholic Charities Atlanta and current Manager of our Post Adoption Services to please help us support HB 748. We hear from the Georgia Association of Licensed Adoption Agencies (GALAA) and the American Academy of Adoption Lawyers all the wonderful work you have done in the name of Adoption. I would like to borrow some of your time by having you read some of the background on HB 748.

Being a GALAA associate member, we have worked with Representative Buzz Brockway to bring HB 748 to the General Assembly because we believe strongly that Georgia-born adult adoptees should have their civil right to obtain a copy of their Original Birth Certificate (OBC) restored to them. , when a child is adopted the child's OBC is replaced with an amended birth certificate showing their adoptive parents as their parents and changing their name to the name given to them by their adoptive parents. The adoptee's OBC is then sealed, pursuant to legislation passed by the General Assembly in 1941. Currently an adoptee's OBC is *only* available "upon order of a court of competent jurisdiction."

We believe it is important to know the reason for the 1941 legislation, because only then can you know if it is appropriate to change the current law. The 1941 General Assembly sealed the records to protect the "*bastard*" child, and the adoptive family; from embarrassment and ridicule (today we would say it protected them from "bullying"). Well as you know, the term "*bastard*" no longer appears in the Georgia Code (in fact, it was replaced with "*illegitimate*" and that term was replaced with the current "*born out of wedlock*"). Gone also is the stigma associated with an out of wedlock birth; therefore, it is no longer appropriate that an adult adoptee has to obtain an order from a court of competent jurisdiction to be able to obtain a copy of their own birth record. Other states have unsealed adult adoptee's OBC's and litigation in those states has confirmed that a birth parent has no privacy right that would be violated by the disclosure to the adult adoptee of their OBC. After all it is a record of adoptee's birth.

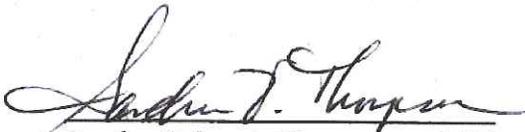
You may also hear from representatives of GEAR - Georgians for Equal Access to Records and the American Adoption Congress asking you to support HB 748 as there is a large grassroots effort to get Georgia's law changed this year.

Simply put HB 748 will restore the right to Georgia-born adult adoptees to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate (OBC) by merely paying the standard fee to Vital Records; like anyone else born in Georgia can do.

This type of legislation is supported by national organizations such as the American Adoption Congress, Concerned United Birthparents, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), and the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC). Locally it is supported by GALAA - the Georgia Association of Licensed Adoption Agencies, and by GCAL - the Georgia Council of Adoption Lawyers, in addition to GEAR - Georgians for Equal Access to Records.

We believe that you would agree with us, that every adult adoptee should have the right to obtain a copy of his own original birth certificate, should they so desire. We graciously thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,



Sandra Valencia Thompson, LPC
Manager of Clinical Services



Joseph Krygiel
Chief Operating Officer