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**From:** pschibbe@aol.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 17, 2013 9:58 AM  
**To:** phc.testimony@cga.ct.gov.  
**Subject:** Recommended Language for Raised Bill SB 59 for Public Health Committee Members for Hearing Date February 20, 2013  
**Attachments:** PRELIMINARY\_ACCESS\_TO\_OBC\_LEG\_REV.docx

Dear Public Health Committee Administrator,

Could you please provide members of the Public Health Committee members copies of the following "Preliminary Draft of Legislation for SB 59". This draft was co-written by *ACCESS CONNECTICUT* and the Connecticut Department of Public Health. We recommend to the PHC they adopt the language in this draft when the committee agrees to a raised bill for SB 59.

Sincerely,  
Paul Schibbelhute  
Legislative Advisor  
*ACCESS CONNECTICUT*  
15 Seminole Dr  
Nashua, NH 03063  
[pschibbe@aol.com](mailto:pschibbe@aol.com)  
603-930-2091

February 20, 2013

Co-Chair Terry B. Gerratana  
Public Health Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 3000  
Hartford, CT 06106

Subject: Support for Proposed Senate Bill 59

Dear Co-Chair Gerratana,

My name is Paul Schibbelhute I am a birthfather and have been reunited with my son since 1998. My son was born in Hartford Connecticut in 1977. I am the New England Regional Director of the American Adoption Congress. I come here today in support of Proposed Senate Bill SB 59.

This bill is about restoring the right for all adult adoptees 21 years of age or older, born in Connecticut to obtain a non-certified copy their Original Birth Certificates (OBC) from the Vital Records Office (VRO) just like every other citizen of Connecticut. A right that was retroactively taken away by the legislature in 1974.

***“This is a human rights issue, adoptees should be able to go to the vital records office and get a copy of their original birth certificate just like any other citizen in Connecticut”***

***“I believe without question my sons right to know information about his birthparents will always trump my right to any perceived right to privacy.”***

#### **How does SB 59 change the law?**

SB 59 is legislation that is almost identical to the legislation that has recently passed in New Hampshire, Maine and Rhode Island. It is legislation that respects the rights of adult adoptees to obtain a uncertified copy their original birth certificates as well as respecting the rights of birth parents to express their desire for contact with their biological son or daughter.

- Adoptees 21 years old or older can request a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate by filling out a form and sending it to the VRO

- The new law will also allow a birth parent to file a Contact Preference Form (CPF) to the Department of Children and Families to express their desire for contact with their biological son or daughter in one of the three following ways:
  - a) I would like to be contacted
  - b) I would like to be contacted but through an intermediary of my choosing, i.e. the placing agency, personal friend, etc.
  - c) I do not want to be contacted.
  
- A birth parent may also file a Health History Form (HHF) with DCF. These forms will be placed on file at the DCF. An adoptee who requests the OBC from the Vital Records Office will be informed that they should check with DCF to see if there is a CPF or HHF form file by their birthparents. Adoptees and birth parents will be able to go to the Connecticut Vital Records and Department of Children and Families website for detailed information on the new law and how to fill out the new forms.
  
- Adoptees have been searching for their birth families in Connecticut and across the country for decades. At this time there is no mechanism in place for birth parents to let their biological child know if they want to be contacted or not. With the contact preference option in SB 59 there will be a mechanism for birthparents to express their desire for contact with their adult adopted child where one does not exist today.

### **Access to OBC Legislation in New England and the United States**

- Legislators in New Hampshire (2004), Maine (2007) and Rhode Island (2011) have passed legislation similar to SB 59 with nearly 70% of each states legislators voting in favor of restoring the "*human right*" to its native born adult adoptees to obtain their OBC.
  
- Legislators overwhelming believed that this is legislation that balances the rights of adoptees to receive their OBC while allowing birthparents to indicate their desire for contact by their biological son or daughter.
  
- Ten states have passed legislation or have always allowed adult adoptees access to their original birth certificates including Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, New Hampshire, Maine, Oregon, Rhode Island and Tennessee.

## Confidentiality for birthmother

I think in Connecticut the evidence is clear that birth parents identity could never be fully protected.

- For example an adoptee can petition the court to get his or her identifying information.
- Many adoptees have used the internet to search and have found their birth parents.
- In Connecticut it is the adoptive parents who decide whether or not the adoptees original birth certificate is sealed in the first place.
- Certainly any birth parent who surrendered their children for adoption prior to the legislature sealing original birth certificates from adoptees in 1974, knew without question that their names someday would be accessible by their biological child.
- From a 1983 Affidavit/Consent to Termination of Parental Rights (T.O.P.) form published by the State of Connecticut, Superior Court/Court of Probate, clearly states:

***“I further represent that I am aware that the child upon reaching his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, may have the right to information which may identify me (the birth parent) or other blood relatives”***

- Also on this form it is required that the birth parent sign the form to acknowledge that she/he understands the contents of the T.O.P. form. Additionally, a representative of the court either a Judge, Assistant clerk, Notary Public or Commissioner of the Superior Court must indicate by signature, that the T.O.P. form has either been read by or read to the birthparent and that she/he understood the content.
- Since no T.O.P. form has been located for adoptions from 1975 to 1982 it is unclear if the same “right to identifying information” statement was read to birth parents during that period. It would be difficult to understand the logic why this same statement would not have been on the T.O.P. during this time period. This could easily be resolved by the probate court by providing a copy of the T.O.P. form that was in place during that time period.

## **Vital Records:**

- Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island all implemented this new law into their policies and procedures without a fiscal note.
- New Hampshire Vital records has issued almost 1500 OBC's since 2005
  - Generate almost over \$21,000
  - In the seven years only of the 25,000 adoptions that have taken place in NH only 12 birth parents have requested not to be contacted.
- We project that Rhode Island VRO will issue 1948 OBC's in the first year generating approximately \$58,000 and will issue almost 3200 OBC and generate \$96,000 in the first 5 years after the new law passes. See report in folders

## **No reports of any negative consequences or impact to adoption in those states that have passed access to original birth certificate legislation**

- No reports of any lawsuits or negative impact or consequences to adoption in those states that have restored the right for adoptee to obtain their OBC's
- Report of the Catholic Dioceses or their representatives in those states all indicate that there have been no negative consequences to adoption after passing legislation for adoptees to obtain their OBC.
- Opponents of this bill proclaim abortions would increase while adoptions decrease. In the states that have passed almost identical legislation none of the grave concerns voiced by the opposition have come true.
  - As of 2007 Oregon and Alabama abortion rates have declined at least 10% compared to only a 2% decline in abortions nationally.
  - In Oregon after adoptee access, a six-year decline in adoptions stopped and abortion numbers leveled off.
- The assumption that abortions will rise and adoptions will fall is absolutely false. In states that allow adoptees to access their birth certificates, the abortion rate is generally lower than the national average, while adoption rates are higher.
- Denying adult adopted person's access to information related to their births and adoptions has potentially serious, negative consequences with regard to their physical and mental health. As recognized by the U.S. Surgeon General's office in its Family History Initiative, biological family medical history is vital to prevention, early diagnosis and treatment, particularly with regard to diseases and

conditions for which individuals may be genetically predisposed, such as heart disease, cancer, and certain mental health conditions. (EBDI 11/07)

- ***Reunion Registries do not work and have a terrible success rate.*** Since 1978 when Maine created its reunion registry only 65 people have been reunited. In January 2005 the first week New Hampshire began to issuing original birth certificates 149 adoptees receive information about their birth family. More people received information in one week in New Hampshire about the birth families than in 33 years in Maine through the reunion Registry.

***“Access to original birth certificates is a human rights issue, reunion registries are for people who want to be reunited”***

Results from a survey performed by the Center for Survey Research & Analysis at the University of Connecticut indicate that more than four in five Connecticut residents (85%) and 82% of Connecticut’s registered voters would support a law that would allow adult adopted children to obtain copies of their original birth certificate. ***ACCESS CONNECTICUT*** believes it’s time for the Connecticut legislature to listen to their constituents and restore the human right for Connecticut born adult adoptees to obtain copies of their original birth certificates.

SB 59 is legislation that balances the rights of adoptees to receive their OBC while allowing birthparents to indicate their desire for contact by their birth son or daughter. This bill is about restoring the “***human right***” to adult adoptees to be treated just like everyone else in the state of Connecticut. I urge this committee to pass this legislation. It was the right thing to do in NH, Maine and Rhode Island. It’s the right thing to do here in Connecticut.

Sincerely,  
Paul Schibbelhute  
Legislative advisor  
***ACCESS CONNECTICUT***  
15 Seminole Dr  
Nashua, NH 03063  
603-930-2091  
pschibbe@aol.com

Co-Chair Terry B. Gerratana  
Public Health Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 3000  
Hartford, CT 06106

February 20, 2013

Subject: Pro-Life and Pro SB 59

Dear Honorable Senator Gerratana,

In 1994 my wife Lynne was pregnant with our second daughter Stacie. As with most pregnancies ultra sound tests are routinely performed to check the development of the baby. Around the fourth to fifth month of her pregnancy she was scheduled for another ultra sound test. She decided to bring our daughter Kristen so she could be with my wife and watch the technician perform the ultra sound and to see her unborn sister. During the ultra sound test the technician said she needed to step out for a minute and speak with a doctor. When the doctor returned he assisted the technician with the ultra sound test. Sadly, the doctor and technician both realized that the baby had passed away. The doctor did his best to gently and professionally inform my wife and daughter that the baby had passed away.

Needless to say this was a devastating loss for us. After a very traumatic day in the hospital Lynne passed the baby. We then decided that we wanted to bury our child, our daughter Stacie. So we contacted our family and friends to let them know Lynne had lost the baby and that we were going to have a service for our daughter. A touching ceremony was held at St Patrick Cemetery in Hudson, New Hampshire led by our Pastor Father John Horan where our daughter was laid to rest

In 2003, I contacted New Hampshire State Senator Lou D'Allesandro an adoptive parent to ask him to sponsor legislation that would allow adult adoptees to obtain copies of their original birth certificate (OBC). He agreed and SB 335 made its way successfully through New Hampshire House and Senate with almost 70% voting in favor of SB 335. SB 335 was not without opposition as it made its way through the legislature. For me the most offensive opposition came from the New Hampshire Citizens for Life, Inc. In their letter to the New Hampshire legislature they claimed that:

"Senate Bill 335 would exert pressure on pregnant woman to obtain abortions"

I was extremely offended as a Birth father, a Catholic and a Pro-life Republican by statements made by an organization that I have personally contributed to for many years. I think I have clearly demonstrated my respect for the unborn by having buried my daughter Stacie. She was not a fetus she was my daughter! If I believed there was even the slightest chance that SB 335 would have caused an unborn child to be aborted I would never have asked Senator D'Allesandro to sponsor the bill

Individuals and organizations such as Right to Life no matter how committed they are to the unborn have a responsibility to be able to justify and validate outrageous statements in regards to the impact of allowing adoptees access to their original birth certificates. Since 2004 two other states in New England have passed almost identical legislation including Maine (2007) and Rhode Island (2011). No testimony was presented in either state making the same claims as the New Hampshire Citizens for Life. Even New Hampshire Republican Governor Craig Benson, a strong Pro-Life candidate let SB 335 become law in 2004.

Recently I contacted a number of the Catholic Dioceses in those states that have passed access to original birth certificate legislation. In every case even if they originally opposed access to OBC legislation they indicated there have been no negative consequences to adoption in their states.

If these Catholic dioceses believe this is not a fundamental issue with the church and I assume abortion is one of those fundamental issues, then what justification do others have to continue to hold onto the belief that allowing adoptees access to their original birth certificate will result in pregnant woman to choose abortion over adoption.

Data clearly shows that abortion in states that allow adoptees to obtain their OBC has not risen. Additionally, woman who choose abortion are not influenced to choose abortion if they know adoptees would someday be able to obtain identifying information about their birthmothers. For example:

In a national survey of 1,900 women having abortions, not one woman cited the inability to choose a confidential adoption as a factor in her decision to have the abortion. "Reasons for Terminating an Unwanted Pregnancy," Guttmacher Institute, 2003.

It is unfortunate that SB 59 a bill that was modeled on successful legislation that has passed in New Hampshire is subject to the same false predictions made by some opponents of the legislation that became law in New Hampshire. The most important effect of SB 59 will be to tell existing adult adoptees, who gave them birth. Obviously these adoptees cannot be aborted.

SB 59 does not invade any expectant mother's privacy. It will not disclose her pregnancy to the public, to her neighbors, to her friends or even to her family. It will not disclose her identity to anyone except her own biological son or daughter, and not even that for another 21 years,

Today 95% of all adoptions have some type of openness. The vast majority of women who make an adoption plan want their children to be able to contact them when their children are grown. For that reason, Alaska and Kansas, the only two states that have always allowed adult adoptees to know their birth parents' identities, have higher adoption rates and lower abortion rates than the United States as a whole. Since

The following research is from the Evan B. Donaldson Institute on the effects of passing access to original birth certificate legislation:

OBC access does not increase abortion rates. There is no evidence that allowing adopted adults to access their OBCs causes women to choose abortion over adoption because the former is anonymous. Data in states where adult adoptees have always had OBC access (Kansas and Alaska), in those that have amended their laws to allow access, and in those that keep OBCs sealed do not show a discernible relationship with abortion rates. The rates in Kansas and Alaska are lower than the national average, and states that have reopened OBCs have lower abortion rates after access than before. This trend comports with England and Wales, where adoption records have been opened (Affidavit of Frederick Greenman, 1996). There is limited information about any relationship between the decision to have an abortion and to relinquish a child for adoption; however, in a survey of 1,209 women and in-depth interviews with 38 women about their reasons for choosing abortion, none noted the promise or lack thereof of confidential adoption as a factor (Finer, Frohwith, Dauphinee, Singh & Moore, 2005).

OBC access does not decrease adoption rates. Comparative state data on rates of infant adoptions: per 1,000 abortions, per 1,000 live births and per 1,000 non-marital births do not support the proposition that OBC access will result in fewer adoptions. The infant adoption rates in Kansas and Alaska, which have never sealed OBCs, are much higher than the national average. Adoption rates vary markedly from state to state. Where OBC access has been restored prior to 2002, two states had adoption rates higher than the national average and two had lower ones. In comparing adoption rates in five states with access (Kansas, Alabama, Delaware, Oregon and Tennessee) to bordering states without access (Nebraska, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Washington and North Carolina), those states with access had higher adoption rates. (NCFA, 2007; Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2010).

SB 59, which would restore the human right for Connecticut born adult adoptees 21 years of age or older to access a copy of their original birth certificate, is good legislation. It will not force women in crisis pregnancies to choose abortion over adoption; it will not harm Connecticut's unborn children. We ask you to ignore the false fears and listen to the facts. We ask you to vote in favor of SB 59. "It's the Right Thing to Do"

Sincerely,  
Paul Schibbelhute  
15 Seminole Dr.  
Nashua, NH 03063  
603-930-2091  
pschibbe@aol.com

CC: Members of Public Health Committee

## Proposed Changes to Connecticut's Adoption Law and Vital Statistics Statutes

1) Law would allow **only an adult adoptee born in the state of Connecticut, 21 years of age or older** to obtain an uncertified copy of their original birth certificate from the Department of Public Health - Vital Records Office. (DOPH) A right that all Americans enjoy today.

- Adoptees will fill out and file a Pre-Adoption Birth Record Order Form with the DOPH

2) **The law provides birth parents the right to express their desire for contact with their biological child by means of the Contact Preference Form (CPF) as well as providing them the opportunity to fill out a Health History Form (HHF).** A birth parent upon request to the Department of Children and Families ( DCF) will be provided a form to complete expressing their desire for contact with their adult child with the following three options for contact:

- I would like to be contacted;
- I would prefer to be contacted only through an intermediary;
- I prefer not to be contacted at this time.

*NOTE Adoptees will still receive the original birth certificate even if the birthparent requests no contact.*

- They may also complete a Health History Form from DCF

3) **Bill would become law 12 months after passage** which will allow for:

- The DOPH Vital records and DCF offices time to create forms and procedures that would help them implement the new legislation into their policies and procedures.
- Wide spread media coverage of the bills passing.
- Will allow birthparents time to send in their contact preference forms indicating their preference for contact, prior to the issuing of OBC's to adoptees.

4) **A Birthparent can change their preference for contact at any time** by submitting an updated contact preference form.

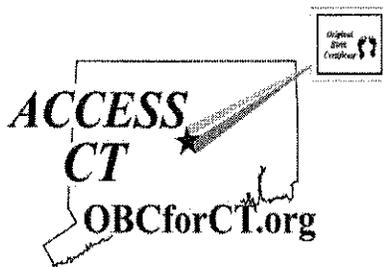
5) **Does not allow adoptee access to other documents** including:

- Counseling notes from work with birthmother
- Discussions related to relationships
- Terminated pregnancies
- Court records of adoption hearing

6) This change in legislation **will provide a mechanism for birthparents to express their desire for contact** where one does not exist today.

7) **The Connecticut Department of Public Health - Vital Records Office and the Department of Children and Families shall maintain and make available to the general public on a bi-annual basis or more frequently if possible as follows:**

- Number of original birth certificates released since the effective date of this bill; (DOPH)
- Number of contact preference forms filed; and (DCF)
- Number of birth parent(s) who indicated on the contact preference form that they would like to be contacted, would like to be contacted but only through an intermediary, or do not want to be contacted. (DCF)
- Number of Health History Forms (DCF)



February 20, 2013

Co-Chair Terry B. Gerratana  
Public Health Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 3000  
Hartford, CT 06106

Subject: Projected Impact of SB 59 on the Connecticut Department of Public Health - Vital Records Office

Dear Honorable Senator Gerratana,

The following is a report that was compiled to understand the impact SB 59 would have on the Connecticut Department of Health and specifically the Division of Vital Records Office if enacted (CTVRO). *ACCESS CONNECTICUT* has met with representatives of the CTVRO over the last few years to explain the details of our bill. Most recently we met with Connecticut State Registrar Jane Purtil and her colleagues at the DOPH on September 19, 2013 in an effort to come to an understanding of the concerns expressed by the DOPH in testimony to bills similar to SB 59

At our September meeting we came to an understanding of the CTVRO main concerns as follows:

- Request that Department of Children and Families to receive and file the birth parent Contact Preference Form (CPF) and Health History Forms (HHF).
- Impact to the CTVRO to processing original birth certificates.
- Who is "authorized applicant" that the original birth certificate is to be released to.

A draft of legislation has been co-written by *ACCESS CONNECTICUT* and the DOPH that addresses these concerns and defines which department has responsibilities for issuing original birth certificates and receiving and filing the CPF and HHF. *ACCESS CONNECTICUT* recommends the Public Health Committee adopt the language in this draft for their 'Raised Bill SB 59' when it is voted out of committee.

From our meetings with the CTVRO we learned of the logistics that will be required for the CTVRO office to issue original birth certificates. We recognized that the issuing of OBC's would be more involved because of the location of the actual birth records. We also recognize that when this legislation passes it would increase the work load at the CTVRO for the first 3-6 months after passage.

In an attempt to mitigate the impact to the CTVRO office we indicated in our bill that the new law would become effective in June 1, 2014. This would allow the CTVRO over one

year to prepare the forms and procedures required to implement the new law. Since three states in New England have passed similar legislation to that pending in Connecticut, their websites and forms are available on line and should prove to be invaluable to them. This should also help to minimize the impact to their office and time required to create the needed forms, which would allow them to have forms on line months in advance of the bill becoming effective. These states are listed below in this letter.

With these forms online well in advance of the new law going into effect the CTVRO office would see a steady stream of requests spread out over time. This would prevent any major influx of requests just prior to the effective date of the new law. I offered to the CTVRO the names of the heads of each Vital Records Office in New England that has passed similar legislation as a contact resource for them.

We have projected based on the number of adoptions in New Hampshire (25,000) and in Connecticut (62,480) that the CTVRO would process approximately 1948 requests for OBC's (\$30.00 per OBC) in the first year and a total 3194 requests in the first five years. This would generate \$58,000 in the first year and approximately a total of \$96,000 in the first five years after the new law goes into effect. I have created several tables on the following page that show the projected numbers for requests for the first year, by month and a second table that shows the total number of requests for OBC's per year for the first five years.

New Hampshire Actual and Connecticut Projected Pre-Adoption Requests for The First Year			
Month	New Hampshire 2005	Month	Connecticut June 2014 thru May 2015
Jan	343	Jun	875
Feb	131	Jul	328
Mar	101	Aug	252
Apr	45	Sep	292
May	43	Oct	107
Jun	19	Nov	48
Jul	23	Dec	57
Aug	13	Jan	33
Sep	28	Feb	70
Oct	11	Mar	28
Nov	16	Apr	47
Dec	6	May	15
<b>Totals</b>	<b>779</b>		<b>1948</b>

<b>New Hampshire Pre-Adoption Statistics from 2005-2009 and First Five Years for Connecticut (In Bold)</b>								
Year	Contact Preference Forms Filed	Requests for contact	Request for contact by an Intermediary	Requests Not to be contacted	Medical History Forms Submitted	Requests for OBC	Connecticut Numbers by Year	Projected Requests for OBC in Connecticut
2005	53	36	6	11	27	779	1st Year	<b>1948</b>
2006	2	0	1	1	0	138	2nd Year	<b>345</b>
2007	1	1	0	0	1	139	3rd Year	<b>348</b>
2008	5	5	0	0	2	121	4th Year	<b>303</b>
2009	6	6	0	0	2	100	5th Year	<b>250</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>67 (167)</b>	<b>48 (120)</b>	<b>7 (18)</b>	<b>12 (30)</b>	<b>32 (80)</b>	1277	5 year total	<b>3194</b>

NOTE: Total numbers in **BOLD** parentheses are projected numbers for Connecticut for the first five years if SB 59 as drafted is enacted.

The numbers for Connecticut were derived by multiplying the NH numbers in both tables by 2.5 (the ratio of number of adoptees in CT/NH = 62, 480/25,000 = 2.5)

If you have any questions in regards to this information please let me know. We would be glad to discuss the details of our projections.

Sincerely,  
Paul Schibbelhute  
Legislative Advisor  
**ACCESS CONNECTICUT**  
15 Seminole Dr  
Nashua, NH 03063  
pschibbe@aol.com  
603-930-2091

Vital Records Office Contacts in New England that have passed similar legislation to SB 296

**New Hampshire**

Melanie A. Orman  
Adoption Coordinator  
New Hampshire Department of State  
Division of Vital Records Administration  
71 South Fruit Street  
Concord, NH 03301-2410  
(603) 271-4156  
[morman@sos.state.nh.us](mailto:morman@sos.state.nh.us)

Stephen M. Wurtz, Acting Director & State Registrar  
Chief Fraud Prevention & Investigation Coordinator  
NH-Department of State  
Division of Vital Records Administration  
71 South Fruit Street  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301  
(603) 271-4655  
(603) 271-3447 fax  
[stephen.wurtz@sos.nh.gov](mailto:stephen.wurtz@sos.nh.gov)  
[http://www.sos.nh.gov/vitalrecords/Preadoption\\_birth\\_records.html](http://www.sos.nh.gov/vitalrecords/Preadoption_birth_records.html)

## **Maine**

Marty Henson, State Registrar and Director  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
Division of Public Health Systems  
Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics  
11 State House Station  
244 Water Street  
Augusta, ME 04333-0011  
Telephone: (207) 287-5468  
FAX: (207)287-5470  
[Marty.L.Henson@maine.gov](mailto:Marty.L.Henson@maine.gov)  
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/phs/odrvs/vital-records/index.shtml>

Kristine Perkins MPH  
Director, Division of Public Health Systems  
Executive Director, Public Health Emergency Preparedness  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)  
11 State House Station, 286 Water Street, Key Plaza 6th Floor  
Augusta, ME 04333  
Office 207-287-8104  
Blackberry 207-233-8968  
[kristine.perkins@maine.gov](mailto:kristine.perkins@maine.gov)

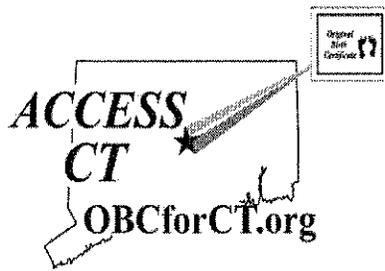
Sharon L. Wright  
Adoption Coordinator  
Vital Records  
244 Water Street  
Augusta, ME 04333  
[Sharon.Wright@maine.gov](mailto:Sharon.Wright@maine.gov)

## **Rhode Island**

Colleen Fontana  
Chief, State Registrar,  
Rhode Island Department of Health  
Vital Records  
Room 101  
3 Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908  
Voice: 401-222-3364  
FAX: 401-222-4393  
[colleen.fontana@health.ri.gov](mailto:colleen.fontana@health.ri.gov),

Cynthia A. McKay  
Deputy State Registrar  
Rhode Island Department of Health  
Vital Records  
Room 101  
3 Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908  
Voice 401-222-2812

[Cynthia.McKay@health.ri.gov](mailto:Cynthia.McKay@health.ri.gov),



OBCforCT.org

February 20, 2013

Co-Chair Terry B. Gerratana  
Public Health Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 3000  
Hartford, CT 06106

Subject: Research on Catholic Dioceses positions on the impact to adoption, in their states after passing adoptee access to original birth certificate legislation.

Over the last few years we have spoken with many organizations around the state of Connecticut to understand their position on passing legislation similar to SB 59 that would restore the right for adult adoptees born in Connecticut to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate (OBC). I have been particularly interested in the varying positions of the Catholic Church in other states that have either restored the right or have always allowed adoptees in their state to obtain their OBC. The following information is research that I have undertaken that speaks to the retrospective positions of the Dioceses in those states. This report was forwarded to the Archdiocese of Hartford last year when SB 296 was in the Select Committee on Children.

For several years now I have been trying get the retrospective position of the many Dioceses' in those states that have passed or are considering passing legislation that allows all adult adoptees in their states to access their original birth certificates, including Oregon, Alabama, New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island and Georgia. The two states that have which have never closed their records to adoptees are Alaska and Kansas. At this time I have received very positive responses back from most of the following Diocese's listed below. The Diocese of Anchorage and Diocese of Kansas City are working on providing me with their retrospective position on always allowing adult adoptee access to their original birth certificates

Archdiocese of Portland Oregon (Passed legislation in 1998)  
Diocese of Birmingham Alabama (Passed legislation in 1998)  
Diocese of Manchester NH (Passed legislation in 1998)  
Diocese of Portland Maine (Passed legislation in 1998)  
Diocese of Providence Rhode Island (Passed legislation in 1998)  
Archdiocese of Atlanta Georgia (Pending legislation)  
Archdiocese of Anchorage Alaska (Never closed records)  
Archdiocese of Kansas City (Never closed records)

## Oregon

In 1998 Measure 58 a ballot measure passed in Oregon restoring the human right for adult adoptees to obtain their OBC, I contacted Mary Jo Tully, Chancellor, at the Archdiocese of Portland Oregon to get their retrospective position on the passing of adoptee access legislation in Oregon, Ms. Tully provided this information to me"

***"Since, the person who was the Executive Director in 1998 is no longer here I did some investigating myself. I believe that we did not take a position on this measure (which passed incidentally) because Oregon has an initiative policy that results in many signature gathering efforts and many, many initiatives. Our policy is to only take positions on those initiatives with a strong religious component. In late 1997, for instance, we were working very hard to repeal the Assisted Suicide Law. Ballot Measure 58 was upheld after being challenged by several birth mothers. Oregon's open records policy has been in effect since the summer of 2000."***

**Mary Jo Tully**

## Alabama

In 2000 Alabama Governor Don Siegelman signed into law HB-690, a bill that allows adult adoptees unconditional access to their original birth certificates and other documents in their files held by the Department of Vital Services. I spoke with Tom Cook D.S.W, Director Catholic Family Services at the Diocese of Birmingham to get his retrospective position on the passing of adoptee access legislation in Alabama. Mr. Cook clearly indicated that the Diocese of Alabama supported the passage of HB-690 in 2000. He indicated that he would have someone in his office provide me a report with details of the Diocese position.

## New Hampshire

In 2004 while adoptee access legislation SB335 was in the New Hampshire legislature the Diocese of Manchester did not support this legislation. I recently spoke with Joseph Naff, Director of Clinical and Family Services of New Hampshire Catholic Charities. He indicates "**that although several birthmothers contacted the Catholic Charities Office concerned about the passing of SB335 Mr. Naff indicated there have been no problems or no negative impact to adoption since the passing of SB 335.**" Additionally, Steve Wurtz Registrar on New Hampshire Vital Records and Jack Lightfoot Former Director of Advocacy Child and Family Services, indicated they had no knowledge of any problems or lawsuits as a result of passing adoptee access to their original birth certificate legislation in New Hampshire.

## Maine

In 2005, while adoptee access legislation was in the Maine legislature, the Diocese of Portland did not support this legislation. In 2010 I spoke with Mr. Marc R. Mutty, Director of the Office of Public Affairs for the Diocese of Portland to get his retrospective position on the passing of adoptee access legislation in Maine. He indicated "**from his perspective, he knew of no particular problems or complaints that have resulted from the implementation of this law and they were pleased with this outcome.**" Additionally, according to Donald R. Lemieux, former State Registrar and Director of the Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics and Former State Senator Paula Benoit both indicated they had no knowledge of any problems or lawsuits as a result of passing adoptee access to their original birth certificate legislation in Maine.

## Rhode Island

In Rhode Island we reached out to and spoke with Mr. Michael Guilfoyle, Communications Director and Father Bernard Healy Government Liaison for the Diocese of Providence to get their position on adoptee access to their original birth certificate legislation. In 2009 they indicated that they would be taking a neutral position on this legislation, a position which they held through 2010 and 2011. On July 1st, 2011 Governor Lincoln Chafee signed into law in Rhode Island Senate Bill 0478 Sub A, legislation restoring the human right for adult adoptees to obtain their OBC. Several weeks after the bill passed I spoke with Father Healy to ask him why the Diocese of Providence had taken a neutral position on this legislation. He simply stated that "**this was not a fundamental issue for the Diocese of Providence**" and that they did not need to oppose this type of legislation.

## Georgia

On February 21, 2012 Georgia Bill HB 748 passed in the House Judiciary Committee and is shortly to go to the Georgia House for a vote. Catholic Charities of Atlanta has provide a letter of support for HB 748 stating that

**"Being a Georgia Association of Licensed Adoption Agencies 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."** The complete letter from the Catholic Charities to the Georgia Legislature is attached to this email.

As you can see from my data there hasn't been any negative impact to adoption, no lawsuits or any problems in any of the states that have passed access to OBC legislation. Even the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire and the Diocese of Portland of Maine, who opposed the original legislation, have indicated there have been no problems after their states have passed access to OBC legislation. The representative from the Diocese of Portland even indicated that they were pleased with the outcome after the passing of this legislation in Maine.

Of the two dioceses that remained neutral or did not oppose access to OBC legislation, (the Archdiocese of Portland Oregon and the Diocese of Providence Rhode Island,) they chose not to oppose this legislation because they indicated that this was not a fundamental issue for their dioceses.

The Diocese of Birmingham Alabama and Archdiocese of Atlanta, Georgia have showed their support by publicly acknowledging their support for restoring the human right for adult adoptees in their states to obtain their original birth certificates. The letter written by the Catholic Charities of Atlanta in support of HB 748 to my knowledge is unmatched by any other Catholic Charities in America.

In closing, I hope the Public Health Committee on Children will consider the retrospective and current positions of the Dioceses discussed in this report while considering SB 59. It is clear from reputable sources from other states that passing access to OBC this legislation will not have any negative effects to adoption in Connecticut. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional information or for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,  
Paul Schibbelhute  
New England Regional Director  
American Adoption Congress  
15 Seminole Dr  
Nashua, NH 03063  
[pschibbe@aol.com](mailto:pschibbe@aol.com)  
603-930-2091

cc: Members of the Public Health Committee

Contact information for the Dioceses that I have provided data for in this report.

### Oregon

**Mary Jo Tully, Chancellor**  
**Archdiocese of Portland Oregon**  
**2838 East Burnside St**  
**Portland OR. 97214-1895**  
Ph. (503)-233-8322  
Fax (503)-234-2545  
Email: [mjtully@archdpdx.org](mailto:mjtully@archdpdx.org)

### Alabama

Tom Cook D.S.W, Director  
**Catholic Family Services**  
**Diocese of Birmingham Alabama**  
1515 12th Avenue South  
Birmingham AL, 35205  
205-324-6561  
E-mail: [tcook@cfsbhm.org](mailto:tcook@cfsbhm.org)

### New Hampshire

Joseph P. Naff, LICSW  
Director of Clinical and Family Services  
New Hampshire Catholic Charities  
Director, Office for Healing and Pastoral Care  
Diocese of Manchester  
215 Myrtle Street  
Manchester, NH 03104  
Ph. (603) 663-0233  
Fax (603) 623-7676  
Email: [jnaff@nh-cc.org](mailto:jnaff@nh-cc.org)

### Maine

Mr. Marc R. Mutty, Director  
Office of Public Affairs  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland  
510 Ocean Avenue  
Portland, Maine 04103  
Telephone (207) 773-6471  
Email: [marc.mutty@portlanddiocese.org](mailto:marc.mutty@portlanddiocese.org)

### Rhode Island

Michael K. Guilfoyle  
Communications Director:  
Diocese of Providence  
One Cathedral Square  
Providence, RI 02903-3695  
Phone: (401) 278-4601  
Fax: (401) 278-4659  
Email: [mguilfoyle@dioceseofprovidence.org](mailto:mguilfoyle@dioceseofprovidence.org)

## **Georgia**

Joe Krygiel *CEO*,  
Catholic Charities Atlanta  
**Main Office**  
**680 West Peachtree Street, NW**  
**Atlanta, GA 30308**  
Telephone: 404-881-6571  
General Fax: 404-888-7816  
Confidential Fax: 404-885-7477  
Email: [jkrygiel@catholiccharitiesatlanta.org](mailto:jkrygiel@catholiccharitiesatlanta.org)

## **Alaska**

Executive Director Susan Bomalaski,  
Catholic Social Services Alaska  
3710 E. 20th Avenue,  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508  
Phone (907) 222-7351  
Fax: (907) 258-1091  
Email: [sbomalaski@cssalaska.org](mailto:sbomalaski@cssalaska.org)

## **Kansas**

Jan M. Lewis  
President and CEO  
**Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas**  
9720 West 87th Street  
Overland Park, KS 66212  
Phone 913.433.2102  
Fax: 913.433.2101  
[jlewis@catholiccharitiesks.org](mailto:jlewis@catholiccharitiesks.org)