

Michael Schoer HB 5144

My name is Michael Schoer and I thank you for allowing me to submit testimony to support restoring adult adoptee access to our original birth certificates. I am 45 years old. I am a combat military veteran. I am a happily married father of two young children. I am a retired New York City public servant & I am also an Adoptee.

I have always known I was adopted. I love my family dearly and I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world. They gave me and my two sisters everything we needed and a fair amount of what we wanted. Both of my parents, especially my mom, were open to the questions I had concerning my adoption and they answered the questions truthfully and honestly. I am not looking to replace my family or intrude into someone else's life. I just want to know where I came from just like everyone else.

Ever since I was about 13 years old, I wanted to know where I came from. I wanted to know why I was so tall and where did I get my green eyes from. Then my questions expanded to wanting to know what my biological parents looked like, their religion and where they lived and grew up. I also wanted to know their medical history which is my medical history.

These are the regular, common things that most non adopted people can simply turn to their Mom, Dad, Uncle, and/or Grandparents and simply ask the question and get an answer. Adult adoptees do not have that privilege.

Our original birth records are sealed forever when our adoptions are finalized. Sealing our original birth records and original identities is outdated and needs to be changed. Times have changed and so must this law.

Adult adoptees are being discriminated against solely because of the way in which our births were handled and therefore we are being treated differently than everyone else.

This past October 17, 2013, I found my natural mother (my biological mother) who is still alive and living in Long Island. It took me about 30 years to find her with on and off searching. I now know my heritage and biological medical information. I spent a lot of money and time to accomplish this. I had a DNA test performed. I paid an investigator. I befriended search angels to help me find her. I posted my search information on social media web sites. I spent countless hours, days and weeks in libraries looking through phone books, high school yearbooks and anything else I can get my hands on that would give me any information about the first chapter of my life. I deserve (adoptees deserve) to know who we are and where we came from. I now know that my biological family is mostly German. I now know that my natural mother is almost 6 ft tall, has multiple sclerosis, as did her mother (my natural grandmother) and has fought breast cancer which is very important since I have a daughter. I now know that my biological mother spent her entire life with my biological father, later marrying him. I learned that he spent 36 years as a New York City firefighter. When she knew that I found her, first she was in shock, and then she cried. Soon after, she called me. I was so excited, I took a picture of the caller ID on my telephone that showed her name because I couldn't believe that this was finally happening. Our 1st phone call was about 50 minutes long & we spoke about this, that, everything and nothing. We made plans to meet a couple of weeks later which went extremely well. When she first saw me she turned her head away & she got emotional. I put my hand on her shoulder, my cheek on hers, I sat down next to her and we just looked at each other in amazement. She held my hand for the first 30 minutes until her arthritis started to bother her. We met for 3 hours. She was happy and relieved to know that her son was doing well. Since then, we've visited several times and talk about once a week on the phone. Her friend of many years told me, that she never forgot about me because

on mother's day, she would tell the staff at the assisted living home she's in, that she's a mother. During most of my life, we've only been just a 30 minute car ride away from each other.

Only an adopted person can understand how it feels not to know how our lives began. I'm fine with being adopted but sealing my original identity and birth records is hurtful, shameful, disrespectful and most of all it is discriminatory. I feel more complete as a person knowing how my life began. Please ask yourselves, would you buy a book with the first chapter missing or go to a movie and intentionally miss the first five minutes? You may still enjoy what you read and what you see but how in the world can you know how it all began and how it's all tied in together. To a few, it may not matter. But it should be the decision of the individual to want to know their history or not and not the government. It is very important for everyone to be treated equally. I cannot tell you in the right words how fulfilling that this experience for me has been. Times have changed and so must the current law that seals an adoptees original birth records. Everyone is supposed to be treated equally right? Then why are adoptees being treated like we are 2nd class citizens? Thank you very much for listening, for your support and I pray that this bill will pass in the very near future.

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