

February 28, 2014

CT General Assembly  
Public Health Committee

To Co-Chairs Senator Gerratana and Representative Johnson, and Members of the Public Health Committee

I come before you today to ask for your support of **HB 05144, An Act Concerning Access to Birth Certificates and Parental Health Information for Adopted Persons**. I strongly believe that ALL adult adoptees should have access to their original birth certificates, and the bill should be both retroactive and prospective. This is a fundamental right that is afforded to all other members of our society and one that may even be taken for granted by the general public BUT not if you were adopted in CT. It is the stated mission of the CT Department of Public Health to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of our state.

HB 05144 is a matter of removing discrimination and stigma faced by adult persons who were adopted in CT but are deprived by CT law since such right was taken away in 1975 to obtain their original birth certificate and thus having access to their original identity and further acquiring critical updated medical history of their biological family. Both federal and state public health agencies and professionals attest that biological family medical and genetic data aids in the prevention, early detection, and treatment of thousands of inherited diseases not only for the adult adopted person but for their own children as well.

I retired from a 34 year social work career in 2011 from the CT Department of Children and Families where I was involved with birth parents in both voluntary and involuntary termination of parental rights and with the placement of legally freed children for adoption. As a DCF social worker, I adhered to CT law but did not make any promises of total anonymity to any birth parent as that was not a provision of CT law. The promise made to a birth parent was to do our agency's very best in securing a proper and loving family for their child. Although a DCF-338 form, Medical Information on Genetic Parent, was completed and given to the adoptive family at finalization, this information was taken at a point in time when birth parents were generally in their 20's and 30's. A major concern for adult adoptees is that they do not receive subsequent and ongoing health information on their birth relatives to help them in preventing and dealing with so many medical conditions as existing state or adoption agency registries have been often ineffective, costly and not timely.

It is significant to note that research done by accredited sources, including the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, have found that the vast majority of birth mothers do not want to remain anonymous to the children they either relinquished voluntarily or were involuntarily terminated whether it be 20, 30 or more years ago. As early as the 1970's, adoption agency practices as well as societal views across the country and in CT began shifting toward greater openness and more connections between a child's birth and adoptive families. CT passed the Identified Adoption statute in the late 1980's in recognition of the growing desire and importance for medical information and identity sharing between birth and adoptive families. For the possible small number of birth parents living who do not desire contact, HB 05144 does contain the provision of a contact preference form on which a birth parent may stipulate the type of contact or no contact desired with the adult adopted person.

It is now time to "Do the Right Thing" and vote for passage of HB 05144 to restore access for adult adoptees to their original birth certificates.

Respectfully submitted,  
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