

Terri S. Vanech HB 5144

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

I am a 48-year-old adoptee living in Old Greenwich. I write to ask for your support of Raised Bill 5144, An Act Concerning Access to Birth Certificates and Parental Health Information for Adoptive Persons.

The so-called "privacy" afforded me and my fellow adopted citizens by denying me access to my original birth certificate is, in fact, a life sentence of pain.

Although I was born and adopted in New York, my story is the same for adoptees born here in Connecticut.

In the eye of the law, I am always *less than*.

I am always "other."

Learning who I truly am has required years of sleuthing, searching, hoping.

Imagine what it is like to cope with the stunning knowledge that your original identity has been ERASED and hidden away.

Having found my first mother a year ago I'm only scratching the surface of this journey. Truthfully, I may never fully process all of the emotional issues related to being adopted. It is overwhelming.

For years the lack of truth has affected me in countless ways

- in my relationships with others
- in my view of myself
- in my ability to obtain thorough medical care
- in my efforts to obtain proper medical care for my now teenage daughter -- and years from now for her children and grandchildren

Every single time I visit a new doctor, I have had to leave half the forms blank. While much of the rest of the world takes precautions against heart disease or cancer, I can only wait and see.

The same is true when I take my daughter, now 17, to a doctor.

Imagine telling a surgeon getting ready to move your child's tibia and wrap her in a full leg cast for six weeks that you don't know if other family members also have misaligned knee caps.

Imagine the helplessness connected to not having a family history to share with the psychiatrist trying to help your depressed, suicidal teenager find herself again.

Imagine, too, what it's like to be a blank slate, no idea of your true ethnicity or other basic details about yourself.

When my daughter was younger and had school projects about her family tree, she could talk in depth about her Hellenic roots, but until I found my first mother last year, she couldn't discuss the rest of her heritage.

Neither could I.

And for all this, society says I am to be grateful, glad to be chosen.

In fact, laws like those currently in force in Connecticut treat me as a perpetual child and a second-class citizen. Nothing to be grateful for there.

It's time the old law is stricken and we adoptees achieve equality. It's time for ALL adult adoptees to have access to their original birth certificates, and the bill should be both retroactive and prospective.

Thank you for your consideration.

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