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the science & spirit of raising successful children

Dear Connecticut legislators,

I'm writing to urge your support of an amendment to Senate Bill 972 to allow adult adoptees born and adopted in Connecticut before October 1, 1983 to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. This would extend the right already restored to pre-1983 adoptees under Public Act 14-133.

I write and lecture worldwide on the emotional and psychological issues surrounding adoption, which are complex and profound. To be barred by law from accessing information about themselves adds tremendously to the issues of identity and "eternal-child" status with which many adoptees struggle.

I've written many of these letters over the past 24 years of my adoption reform work, and with each passing year it becomes more poignantly ironic: I am a respected authority in the field of adoption psychology, I hold a Ph.D. in Early Human Development, am a published author, teach at the graduate level, am 61 years old, met my birth parents exactly 40 years ago, was at my birth mother's death bed... and yet as a California-born adoptee my original birth certificate remains sealed to me, the birth certificate which was "amended" to expunge all official traces of Liz as my birthing mother, and of my original identity as Katherine McDavid.

***Even for those with loving and supportive adoptive parents, to gaze upon the amended birth certificate is to experience the deepest effrontery, to be treated as a child in perpetuity, lied to "for your own good."*** It should be a civil right for any adult to know his or her origins.

**We know such secrecy to be detrimental to adoptees in their lifelong development.** Opponents of access have been persuaded by those who euphemistically invoke the notion of "privacy" or "confidentiality," shrewdly borrowing credibility from the professions. The sealed record was originally instituted as a *protection for the adopted person*, against the stigma of illegitimacy.

**Birth parents never asked for confidentiality; it was thrust upon them, with good reason, for at that time it conformed to the single standard to**

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**which all good, conscientious adoption practice should conform: it served the child. The sealed record long ago stopped serving the child.**

The Minnesota Search Institute's well-publicized 1994 study—the largest ever conducted in the U.S.—found adolescent adoptees to be generally well-adjusted, with higher self-esteem than their non-adopted peers. The most dramatic, unambiguous statistic in the study shows that **70% of the adopted girls and 57% of the adopted boys want to meet their birthparents**. To thwart that natural, non-pathologically driven desire through legislative barriers to *their birthright*—knowledge of their origins—**is clearly not in the best interests of the adopted adult!**

You are in the position to help grant adopted persons the same right as everyone else in this country—to know who they were upon entering this world, and from whom borne. ***If you have never not known this, you presume much in saying it isn't profoundly important.***

If you are in support of true access reform, I thank you, commend you and urge you to continue working for adoption legislative reform. If you are opposed, I ask you to look into your heart. Imagine if it were you, wondering. Or you, about to watch your child relinquish your grandchild into the void of anonymity (or should I say, “privacy”)?

Very truly yours,  
Marcy Axness, PhD