



**Testimony in Support of SB 972—An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Records
By Adult Adopted Persons**

Submitted by the Connecticut chapter, National Organization for Women
Cindy Wolfe Boynton, President
March 15, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Cassano and Representative McCarthy Vahey, and Distinguished Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

The Connecticut chapter, National Organization for Women (CTNOW) is dedicated to its multi-issue and multi-strategy approach to women's rights, and is a chapter of the largest organization of feminist grassroots activists in the United States. Our purpose is to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life.

Women's rights leaders have repeatedly cautioned us to be suspicious of women-protective legislation that has been written by men. Such laws deemed that women were too "fragile" to be lawyers, forbade them from serving on juries since they were "the center of home and family life," and barred them from working late at night as high-paid bartenders (but not as late-working, lesser paid cocktail waitresses.) Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has said, "Laws once thought to operate benignly in women's favor - keeping them off juries and relegating them to 'women's work' in the military, for example - in time came to be seen as measures impeding women's opportunity to participate in and contribute to society."

We believe that the current law denying a class of adoptees an equal right to their original birth certificate is one such misguided, supposedly "woman-protective" law. Rather than protecting women, it was put in place as part of an oppressive system that denied women choice over their right to parent, and to control their sexuality and their bodies. These laws are based on the premise that any woman who had broken society's patriarchal norms by becoming pregnant "out of wedlock" should be shunned and shamed. **Like many other types of women-protective legislation, the claims of "privacy" created by this law are thinly veiled efforts to silence and marginalize women.**

The current law treats adult women as if they require special legal protections given only to children and the legally incompetent. Keeping these laws in place perpetuates the demeaning stereotype that women who relinquished their children are weak, less than competent adults who need state protection to handle their most basic affairs. It is disrespectful of their autonomy and capacity as adults. We believe adult women are capable of managing their personal business and should be treated as full, equal adults under the law.

Furthermore, adult adopted women (and men) are also discriminated against by existing law. Against their will and without their consent, they have been deprived of a basic birth right to know their origins that is enjoyed by all other citizens. The similarity to historical methods of discrimination against women hits far too close to home.

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