

March 14, 2019

Members of the Committee:

My name is Etta Lappen Davis. I am principal of Etsky Consulting in Bolton, Massachusetts, specializing in providing assistance to child welfare and social service organizations. I was born in Connecticut and have always considered it my home.

I am also the (volunteer) coordinator of Access Massachusetts, a grass roots effort to restore the human right to access to their original birth certificates to ALL adopted persons born in the Commonwealth. Access Massachusetts members represent people who were adopted, birth/first/original/natural parents, adoptive parents, adoption professionals, and extended family of people touched by adoption. Like Access Connecticut, Access Massachusetts believes that there can be no rational justification for granting access to an original birth certificate to someone born on one date, while denying the same human right to someone born on a different date.

Opponents of access to birth certificates often claim that birth/first/original parents were promised confidentiality and that this bill would break that promise. In truth, birth parents' names and identities could never be fully protected. In truth, original birth certificates are not altered until the time of adoption; if there is no adoption, identifying information about birth parents who relinquished parental rights, or whose rights were terminated, remains unsealed and accessible. There never could be guarantees of confidentiality, regardless of what individual social workers might have said.

I am not an adoptee, a birth parent, or an adoptive parent. But, I know countless adoption constellation members whose lives have been drastically improved by having access to the truth about their identities and the circumstances of their births.

I urge you to champion equality and report out favorably on Senate Bill 972.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Etta Lappen Davis