

Members of the Planning & Development Committee

My name is Jane Edwards. I live in Portland, Oregon.

In 1998 Oregon voters passed a ballot measure granting adult adoptees the right to access their original birth certificates. I along with over 900 first mothers appeared in a full page ad in Oregon's largest newspaper the Portland *Oregonian* in support of the measure. It passed with 57 percent of the vote. With encouragement from adoption attorneys, five first mothers filed a court action seeking to have the measure declared unconstitutional as a violation of privacy. The Oregon trial court and the Oregon Court of Appeals rejected their claim. The Court noted that delivering a baby is inherently a non-private act. The U. S. Supreme Court refused to consider the case and the measure went into effect January 2000. Thousands of adoptees have received their birth certificates. Many have joyfully reunited with their families.

In 2013, the Oregon legislature passed a bill allowing adult adoptees to access to most of their court adoption file. The law also allows first parents who placed their children for adoption voluntarily to access documents in the court file which contain the adopted name of their child and the names of the adoptive parents. This has allowed first mothers to find their lost children and help these mothers to begin healing from their loss.

There have been no reported problems with these laws.

I urge the Connecticut Legislature to join the 20 plus states which allow adult adoptees to obtain their original birth certificates regardless of the year of their birth.

Sincerely,

Jane Edwards, JD