

Friday, March 8, 2019

Dear P&D Committee,

I am writing in support of S.B. 972.

I have no "skin in the game" so to speak because I am not a birth mother, adoptee or adopter. I am, however, very concerned that a person is forbidden from having access to their original birth certificate based on their age. You did the right thing before and voted to allow people born in 1983 and after to access this vital piece of information. I have no idea why this arbitrary date was chosen, but to shut out people based on their age is simply discriminatory.

I truly believe that the government should not interfere in this most personal of information. If an adoptee wishes to contact their birth family, why wouldn't you support that? If they wish to get their genetic information, that could very well be a life-saving decision for themselves, their children and their grandchildren on their part. If they are curious about whether they have any brothers or sisters, aunts or uncles, grandparents or cousins, why wouldn't you allow them to start their search by allowing them access to the simple fact of who their mother and/or father are? I understand that you believe a birth mother was promised "secrecy." But in fact, they were not. And, even if they were, how could such a promise bind a newborn? Isn't it true that contracts aren't enforceable if one of the participants didn't agree and didn't sign it? And you know that baby didn't sign that document. Plus, how do you know that the mother hasn't changed her mind and wants to know what happened to the child she carried for 9 months of her life? Even if she kept it a secret, she can always inform the adoptee she doesn't want any relationship with them and, just like those of us not involved in the adopted world, we don't have to have relationships with anyone we don't want to.

You will have lots of personal testimony on why an adoptee would like their information. You'll probably hear from some people who don't want that to happen. But the way I see it, the question is: who decides whether or not a person is allowed to know who their birth parents are? Who gets to decide if they meet that other person and members of their original family? In my opinion, the adoptee should be the one to decide if they want that original birth certificate. Whether or not they can meet a member of their original family is between the adoptee and that particular person. There certainly have been instances where a parent doesn't want a relationship with the child they gave up, but that "child" — now adult's — siblings do have a relationship with the adoptee.

I might also point out that there are TV series, websites, social media accounts and DNA companies that are all concerned with reuniting those separated by adoption. People are going to find out any way they can who they are if they want to know. Why would the government be the barrier to what so many people want? What reason can you possibly have to conceal someone's true identity from them?

Human beings are messy creatures. Whether or not a reunion between an adoptee and any particular member of their original family will be successful is something none of us can predict. What we can say is that the government should not be making the decision to deny an adoptee or the birth family the right to make that decision for themselves.

So, to conclude, I would ask you to extend the right to an original birth certificate to adoptees and their children and grandchildren to those born before 1983. Treat them as the responsible adults they are and let them decide for themselves how they want to proceed.

Beth Finchler