

Testimony to the Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill No. 972
An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Records by Adult Adopted Persons

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Cassano and Representative McCarthy Vahey, Vice-Chairs Senator Champagne and Representative Zawistowski, Ranking Members Representative Baker and Senator Bradley and Distinguished Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

I want to draw your attention today to Senate Bill #972: An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Records by Adult Adopted Persons. My Name is Mary Ellen Hass and I am the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Family & Children's Agency, a multi-service human services organization serving over 13,000 people in Greater Norwalk. Through four core service areas we provide services to Children, Adults, Families and Seniors. Family & Children's Agency has a continuum of services designed to meet the ever growing needs of vulnerable families. In the last 75 years, At Family & Children's Agency has placed hundreds of children each year in loving adoptive homes.

As you know, Senate Bill # 972 allows all adoptees, including persons adopted before October 1, 1983, and their adult children or grandchildren, to obtain uncertified copies of their own original birth certificate from the state Department of Public Health. This bill builds on a law passed in 2014. Under the current law, any adult adoptees born before 1983 cannot obtain their original birth certificate until their biological parents are deceased. However, the state Department of Public Health has this information and due to current law, cannot and will not share it with the adoptees themselves. Bill No. 972 would end the current practices which discriminate between older and younger adoptees. The current argument that this Bill would adversely affect birth mother's confidentiality is untrue as the information would not be made available to the public but rather to the adoptees themselves, thereby protecting the confidentiality of his/her birth mother. The challenges can be many for adoptees as they move into adulthood. Naturally they seek to understand why their biological parent would place them for adoption as they strive to develop a healthy sense of self, but another more important issue many struggle with is the lack of crucial health information found in their birth parents' health histories. SB 972 would allow adoptees access to this important medical information which may prove to be lifesaving in many cases. Until 1975, the rights of adult adoptees included access to their original birth certificates. However, following a floor amendment that was without notice or a public hearing, those rights were stripped and adoptees born before 1983 were left with no recourse and no access to information. Until then, access was the law.

I urge you to weigh this issue carefully before deciding the fate of this bill. To unilaterally deny access to adult adoptees born before 1983 access to information that is currently available to those born after that date, is discriminatory and only adds more challenges that adult adoptees are currently facing. Please support SB 972 and end this current discrimination while also providing a pathway for adult adoptees to information that may in some cases be lifesaving.

On a personal note, in addition to being the Chief Operating Officer of a large social service agency in Fairfield County that has been providing adoptions since 1942, I am the grandmother of Isabella, a beautiful 5-year-old whom my daughter and son in law adopted at birth. Since she was born in 2014, thankfully Isabella has the right to the very information that SB 972 serves to provide those born before 1983. I now know firsthand how important that information will be for her as she grows into a mature young woman. Please don't deny the countless numbers of adoptees the same important information simply because of their date of birth. I urge you to pass SB 972 and restore those rights for all citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you

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