

Dear Honorable Representatives,

I'm writing in support of SB 972 because adoption crosses generations and state lines. As a politician's wife and a birthmother who worked to pass a similar bill in Montana in 2015, I know sometimes you have to decide on big issues with little information and lots of rhetoric. Below is the shortest letter I could compose today on why I am asking you to support SB 972.

If this bill becomes a law, it will affect people who are not living within your jurisdiction, yet you can make their lives better by supporting this bill. One small vote for a huge positive impact.

The Representatives of Montana supported a bill similar to SB 972 almost unanimously because frankly, it is cheaper and easier for the State to provide one system for all adults. Also, it simply makes sense to provide equal rights under the law to all US Citizens in the area of identity. What purpose does it serve the state to keep people in the dark about who they are and who their genetic relatives are?

I was born in Pennsylvania. One of my sons was born in New York. I've lived in other states and three of my sons were born in Montana. People move around in America. Bills like this are being brought to most states in the hopes we'll soon have a national standard for all US Citizens. May all people have the right to know who they are and where they came from regardless of papers signed by their parents.

Keep in mind relinquishment documents are signed at one of the hardest moments in a young person's life, a time when clear thinking is hard to find. The memory for what was said or written on documents signed more than 30 years ago can be foggy or confused. Birthparents are often under duress and pressure to sign relinquishment documents without unbiased legal representation explaining the full long-term reaching effects of those documents.

In fact, quite the opposite is common as it was in my case. I was promised by the adoption agency who acted as my legal representation, a lifelong mediated connection with my son. As soon as I asked to meet him, I was cut off from all communications with the adoptive family. I was very surprised to learn I had no legal recourse because it turns out connection was merely a verbal promise. When I've shared this story at adoption conferences, all birthmothers nod their heads knowingly. The adoption world has a long history of secrets and bold-faced lies with the state governments standing complicit.

My son and I connected for the first time over social media because the laws of NY use an ineffective, complicated, and expensive registry system. I know people are working to change that system. I urge you to join the many states that have reviewed these systems and the laws behind them and determined that birthmothers relinquished their legal rights, but adult adoptees didn't thus adult adoptees deserve unfettered access to their own original birth certificates, just like all the other people born in Connecticut. Please support SB 972.

Elizabeth Ann Jaffe