

## Testimony to support Senate Bill 972

### Birthmother urging support of adoptees' access to original birth certificates in Connecticut

I am a birthmother whose family has been in Connecticut since the 1700's. Having been reunited with the son I surrendered to closed adoption in San Francisco in 1966, I have continuously supported adoptees who seek their original birth certificates, in our state and indeed, in all states in our country. I urge you to support this access in Connecticut, where I was active in Adoption Healing, a Fairfield support group, for many years.

After years of searching, often after long hours in the library during his medical studies, my son, Richard Marc Gutierrez, M.D., found me. We enjoyed a rapturous reunion in Ann Arbor, in March 1995. I watched him graduate from medical school at my university (the University of Michigan) and we have forged a wonderful family relationship. Rick and his family spent their last three Thanksgiving celebrations with us in Shelton. My son and his wife, a physician as well, are medical missionaries in Durban, South Africa. Their older son (my first grandchild) is now in his second year of medical studies at the University of Michigan.

As the Judiciary Committee deliberates on this issue, I urge you to be open to new ideas, overturning past attitudes toward relinquishment and adoption. We birth mothers of over 50 years ago surrendered our children, signing away our parental rights in an era very different from the present. Landlords would not rent to us. Some of us lost our jobs, and we suffered extensively and unfairly. No 'punishment' could be greater than having to give up our children.

I'm one of the lucky ones. My son found me, through my father's doctoral dissertation, and learned of his own heritage as a Mayflower descendant from William Bradford. He and his wife and their younger son attended the fall CT Mayflower Luncheon a few years ago. Although we are reunited, we cannot get his original birth certificate (from California). The Connecticut Society of Mayflower Descendants, however, is willing to accept an affidavit I filed with the Shelton Town Clerk in lieu of an original birth certificate. Still, it would be much easier for us if one were obtainable. My son is also eligible to join the Sons of the American Revolution based on his Connecticut-born ancestor Philip Reed, who fought with John Stark and Ira Allen in Vermont. For several summers we have rented the 1803 Old Reed Homestead near Honeoye, New York. My son and his wife got to stay in Philip Reed's bedroom! Through Philip Reed's wife, Margaret Fitch Reed, we are descended from Jacob Janse Gardineer, one of the early 17th c. Dutch founders of Fort Orange (Albany) in New York.

As a Connecticut property owner, voter, taxpayer, Shelton High School Graduate (1958) and longtime Shelton resident (The Mill, 104 Mill Street) I am your constituent--and also a proud and vocal birthmother who supports you in granting adoptees born in Connecticut their original birth certificates. I have previously testified before the CT Judiciary Committee in Hartford that birthmothers were NEVER promised secrecy or confidentiality. We'd rather know our children!  
(signed) Diane Kathleen Reed Jowdy