

Support for S.B. 972

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in support of S.B. 972. I am an adoptee born in Connecticut in 1964 and included in the only remaining cohort of Connecticut adoptees who are forbidden to access their original birth certificates -- those born between January 1, 1944 and October 1, 1983 with birth parents still living. When I was born, Connecticut law stipulated that I had the legal right to access my original birth certificate at any point after I turned 18. In 1975 this right was taken away retroactively. My adopted brother, born in 1962 and adopted into and raised in the same family as me in Connecticut, has accessed his original birth certificate because he was born in Massachusetts. Here again my access rights remain unequal to those of another Connecticut adoptee.

When I decided to seek out my genetic history in 2011, for medical and genealogical reasons, I worked with my adoption agency. When my birth mother did not respond to their contact attempts and because my birth father had died before I was born, I turned to DNA testing in 2016. From my non-identifying information I knew that my birth father was killed in a car crash just a few months before he planned to graduate from college and marry my birth mother. His parents did not know she was pregnant and when marriage was no longer an option I was put up for adoption. Through DNA testing I had a genetic match with my birth father's younger brother and was able to piece together my back-story and the identities of my birth parents. I was overjoyed to have this knowledge and have been so graciously and warmly welcomed into my birth father's family. I am in regular contact with them and have met many family members.

Sadly my birth mother had some recent trauma in her life and feels unable to revisit what her brother, who I later had a genetic match with also, referred to as "a very stressful and disruptive time in her young life". There is likely no doubt that the residual grief from the loss of her fiancé and the future they had planned together colors her view of the past. But, I feel strongly that the secrecy, stigma, and pronouncement of shame that closed records perpetuates contributes heavily to her inability to respond directly to me or the initial outreach from the adoption agency, an organization that she dealt with so many years ago during that stressful time. Statistically 95% of birth mothers do want some contact with their birth child, but for the 5% who might not, continuing a system of forbidding access to an adoptee's own records only reinforces today the guilt society enacted upon these young mothers back in a time when having a baby out of wedlock was seen as an unforgivable disgrace. It sends a clear message to both the birth mothers and the adoptees that their truth is shameful, when at the very same time the culture of DNA testing is moving society to a place of celebrating truth and enabling reunions.

Given the ease of DNA testing on several public DNA sites and the universal right to know one's origins, unsealing birth records can clearly provide the most private option for finding one's birth parents. It can be offered as the first action for adoptees seeking identity and contact. This initial contact opportunity would allow birth parents to be prepared if an adoptee then decides to do DNA testing and becomes visible to other genetic relatives on public sites. If Connecticut does not provide access to this last adoptee group born between 1944 and 1983, more and more of these adoptees will go straight to DNA testing and current Connecticut law will directly contribute to the randomly timed outing of birth parents to relatives without the birth parent's

prior knowledge. The state will continue to be woefully inadequate, inconsistent, and neglectful in their attempts at privacy through any claim that sealed records for this group of adoptees best protects the privacy of those involved.

Please support and pass S.B. 972. It provides equal rights for the final remaining group of adoptees born between 1944 and 1983 who do not have access to their original birth certificates; it takes a significant step forward in removing stigma caused by forbidden access; and it addresses privacy management by providing a better first step option for adoptees seeking information and contact. This bill moves Connecticut from a state that continues to mandate sealed secrecy, contributing to shame and random revelation of sensitive information, to one that encourages and enables private personal access and planned communication. Thank you for voting yes to this important and common sense bill.

Sincerely,
Mandana MacPherson
(Connecticut adoptee)