

I am a birthmother who supports S.B. 972

Members of the Connecticut Legislature,

I am a birth mother who gave up what turned out to be my only child for adoption, a girl, in May of 1996 when I was nineteen years old. I am writing to urge you to give adult adoptees the right to see where they truly came from. I could bring up many arguments to try to persuade you to do the right thing for adult adoptees that are all factually based. For example I could direct you to the many studies showing adoptees who are unable to ever know their birth origin details have diminished self-esteem, and lack a true sense of self that has detrimental psychological effects. Or point out the numerous genetic medical conditions that an adoptee can't truly know without access to their original birth certificate....I can't imagine how scary it must be for adoptees who have been prevented from obtaining this information when they themselves are ready to start a family. Moving forward so blindly with simply hope to guide them in their reproductive choices - it must be terrifying. But what I'd really like to talk to you about is the idea that we birth mother's want our children to be prevented from seeing their original birth certificate - that we "need" or "want" your protection through keeping those records sealed from our adult children. For me and every other birth mother I have read about who gave up a child sometime during the last 50 years, nothing could be further from the truth.

When I signed away my parental rights at nineteen, I had no idea just how life-changing that experience would be in my life - it has truly defined my life. I didn't know the pain and longing I would feel, nor could I imagine that even with those feelings that DO NOT go away in time, I would also feel something else throughout the years - pride. I didn't know at the time that my daughter's birth certificate was even going to be changed - how can a government document be a party to a lie like that? Only one woman gave birth to my child - and I don't think that makes my daughter's adopted mom any less her mom - it's simply the truth; if I hadn't been her mother first, her other mother would never have been given the privilege of becoming her mother through my choice and sacrifice.

To take that document is an affront to me - not a form of protection. Who are you to decide that my experience of giving birth to my daughter is deemed so insignificant? I chose the adopted parents for my child after much consideration - I took everything from their socio-economic status, length of marriage, levels of education to the fact that I insisted my daughter go with a family that already had another adopted child who was at least 5 years old - that was she would always have an older sibling to discuss being adopted with, plus I could be assured that the adoptive parents had been through the stresses that can come from raising an infant and lastly would know that as their older adopted child entered into kindergarten my daughter would get the individual attention she deserved. I was not afraid of my child seeking me out; I am proud that I gave birth to her, and proud to be responsible for her adoptive parents getting the chance to raise her. Lastly, I would just like to say a little about adoptees; these children - who are now adults asking you to give them their rights back - they are the only party in the entire process that had NO CHOICE in whether or not they were adopted. It is so unfair to punish them by denying them the right to see where and from whom they came from. Please, let all of the adults in the adoption circle be allowed to speak for themselves and behave as adults. If a birth mother receives contact from a child that she isn't comfortable with - let her speak for herself in those

individual - and RARE - circumstances. Don't punish countless adoptees for this unlikely and easily addressed possibility that is contrary to every birth mother's thoughts on this issue, including my own. And please, don't hide what we birth mother's did as though it's shameful and then claim you are doing it for our benefit. We are proud of our children, and proud to be their mother's - and support the one document that represents so much to us being released to our adult children without any further delays.

Thank you for listening, and please do the right thing by these children, by our children.

Sincerely,

Virginia D. Mahfouz
proud birth mother to my daughter,
Olivia C. L. Blydenburgh