

Dear Honorable Representatives

**I am writing to request that you please support H.B. 5408, An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Records By Adult Adopted Persons.**

This law is important to be because of the following connections I have to adoption:

As a birth mom of a 35-year-old son, I feel it is an adoptee right to have access to this information.

As the granddaughter of a woman who was sent away to a home for an unwed pregnant woman in 1927 and died within hours of having given birth to my mom – a mom who always wanted to know who her father was- only discovering long after his passing and at the age of 75

As the wife of an adoptee who searched for over 12 years only to find his mother too late

In 1982, I discovered I was pregnant with my first child. At the time I was a foster youth and dating my first boyfriend. As a foster youth, I was referred to Catholic Charities close to my foster home. I was scared and wanted to keep my baby. However, I was shamed and told that if I truly loved my child I would place him for adoption. My boyfriend was an adoptee and was also being pressured by his parents that this was the best decision for our baby. I was convinced by those at the agency and all those around me this was the best choice and most “unselfish” choice for my baby. Society and Catholic Charities believed that my child needed to be raised by two parents and not a single. I did have one request, I wanted to meet the people who would take home my baby. This was allowed as long as I and my boyfriend signed the surrender papers first.

As we were signing the surrender papers, they slid my boyfriend’s non identifying information to him. My boyfriend was placed in the same Catholic Charities 19 years earlier. The non-identifying information was just that. It provided little to none information about health issues of his birth parents or who and where they were. This will become important later on.

I left the meeting a changed person, I was no longer a young girl but a mom who just abandoned her only child. I spent many years depressed and loss at how could I have given away my own flesh and blood. I attended counseling and support groups to help understand and forgive myself for this decision. This decision still remains the most traumatic choice and life changing I have ever made. On the car ride back to college, the social worker asked why was I crying I will have other children.

Eight years after surrendering our child, the birthfather and myself married. We are celebrating 29 years of marriage this year. We will always have a missing piece to our family. I have always kept my contact information current with Catholic Charities. It was important to me that if the adoptive family ever needed any information from me they would be able to find me. In 1995 the adoptive parents did need information.

When our son was 12(1995) the adoptive mom reached out to Catholic Charities since my son was having a health emergency. Catholic Charities was able to reach and because I had consistently updated my confirm information with each new move. The health issue my son had turned out to not be a concern, however, they did not know this. I can only imagine how vulnerable the parents felt without having access to genetic health imagine, wondering what health issues were. Adoptees experience not knowing their health history when they go to a doctor and they have no idea about any underlying issues or heredity conditions they do not know about.

On the day we sign the papers to place our son for adoption my boyfriend received his non-identifying information. He started a 12-year search before he located his birth mother. My husband’s mother received two letters from him and indicated she would love to meet him. My husband received the call from a full sibling sister (who he did not know about). We attended the wake and funeral. One of the most moving moments in my life was after every left the cemetery my husband asked to help bury his birthmother. This is all he had left to do for her. He never got the chance to meet her. In 2008, Massachusetts change access to birth records for adoptees. If this law was passed many years ago my husband could have had the opportunity to meet his mother.

My husband and I have had the opportunity to meet our son. However, this is not because he had access to his records. This was just luck that his adoptive mom contacted the adoption agency. Although we do not have an ongoing relationship with our son we have provided him with all the health information we have. He knows we will have provided whatever he needs. **Access to birth records is not about reunion or connection but about the right of an adoptee to have access to this information.**

I have written and indicated my support for adoptees to have this information. Since my last letter, my oldest daughter and our placed son each had their first daughter’s. My granddaughter from my daughter will know her genetic health history. My son (if he did not know us) would not know this. I am currently having some health issues. If they become serious, I will share this with my son. Not everyone has this access. – everyone should!

Sincerely Cynthia McGuigan

Fostering Network Changes, Board Member (2017-Current)

American Adoption Congress President (2014-2016) and Board Member (2007-2016)

