

Dear Representatives:

Connecticut Senate Bill 972 now in the Planning & Development Committee grants all adopts access to their original birth certificates. I am a birthmother who was forced by family to adopt my son soon after his birth. In the private adoption agreement, I was told I had no parental rights and could never contact my son, and I signed a contract that I would not disturb my son or his adoptive family EVER. I kept my promise until I was 64 after my first husband died. I never had any other children, but I never forgot the son I had to give away. I celebrated his birthday every year in my heart, but had to keep secret his birth and adoption. There is no way to heal from such trauma, especially as it was a "secret".

I started searching for my son after I heard of the suffering adoptees can experience from having no genetic mirror for their identity. Realizing I had something to offer my son who was now 42, I began searching for him. With the help of Concerned United Birthparents, I found resources to put my personal information in his adoptee file in case he wanted to look for me. However, Arizona law forbid me to do this, and my request was denied in court. Kind Arizona court personnel directed me to their search partner, who found my son and acted as a go between to see if he might be interested in contacting me.

My son's adopted mother had died when he was 24, and he was without a mother for the next 18 years. He was interested in seeing me. We have been in successful reunion for the last seven years. I have two grandsons who I will be helping through the last two years of their college education. And luckily, letting go of my "secret" has allowed successful psychotherapy in releasing the trauma and grief of "giving" my son away.

Connecticut Senate Bill 972 gives adoptees access to their original birth certificate, and allows them the choice to search for their parents. As a birthmother, I never felt I needed protection from my own son knowing about me. I was never told I had any rights as a birthmother before I signed the adoption papers and was lied to by the adoptive parents' attorneys. I had the right to actually change my mind within a year--the time period the adoptive parents had to wait (with my son in their home) before they could petition to adopt.

I am a college graduate with BA and MA degrees, but lacked family support to keep my child during that critical time of my life. Times have changed greatly. Women today have choices and will not lose employment for having a child out of wedlock. Mine was a case of no family support for that short period of time that I was pregnant. Once I was back at work, I could have afforded to raise my son with or without a supportive husband. As it turned out, the adoptive mother of my son was abandoned by her husband when my son was three, and she raised him as a single mother with much difficulty. She had to return to work, and my son was raised by babysitters before he started school and after school until he was 12. His lack of bonding with his adoptive mother and his seclusive life with strangers has hampered his social skills. I was promised he would be given access to college, but that was another broken promise.

Hopefully, the passage of Connecticut Senate Bill 972 would allow adoptees a choice to know and search for birthparents if that is so wished. Please consider passage of this bill and bring choice and clarity back into the lives of adoptees and birthparents.

Sincerely,

Betty O'Dell

Retired High School Teacher & proud mother and grandmother