

Support for Senate Bill 972

TO: Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

My name is Gary Osbrey, a resident of Putnam, CT and I am submitting my testimony IN SUPPORT of SB 972.

I was born in Rhode Island in 1961 and relinquished for adoption. At age 37, after much careful thought, I asked the Department of Vital Records for my Original Birth Certificate. I was denied. I was told the records were sealed. Imagine if you will, a clerk in a records office having access to information that is rightfully mine, and yet I was denied access. To make matters worse, a non-adoptee could enter that same office with the same request and receive an accurate, truthful birth certificate which shows WHO gave birth to them. Why YES for them and NO for me? That is blatantly discriminatory and Rhode Island had the good sense to change the law and end the discrimination. In the six years and eight months that have passed, there have been no problems reported as a result of opening OBC's to adult adoptees. None of the dire predictions by opponents came true. The sky didn't fall. What did happen, however, is ADULTS reached out to other ADULTS thoughtfully, respectfully and privately.

I know this because in July of 2012, at age 50 and after waiting 13 years, I was among the first to receive my Original Birth Certificate from Governor Lincoln Chafee at a ceremony in Providence, RI. After learning the truth, I reached out to my birth mother with a respectfully and lovingly written letter sent in a non-conspicuous fashion. My birth mother responded immediately and we have been in reunion ever since. Shortly after our reunion, I registered with the 23andme DNA registry. That registry has produced a first cousin on my paternal side and a first cousin on my maternal side. This is important to note since as a direct result of Rhode Island changing their laws and opening their records, I reached out DIRECTLY and PRIVATELY to my birth mother. If Rhode Island had not unsealed the records, I would have reached out to my first cousins on the 23andme registry and STARTED the search with them. They would have contacted other family members like their parents, aunts and uncles and tried to figure out who my birth mother was. In this scenario, the LAST person to know I was searching would have been my birth mother, which would have stripped her of her privacy and dignity. The explosion of DNA registries and their popularity is unstoppable and should be a wake-up call for our state legislators to open Original Birth Certificates to all adult adoptees. You have a chance to end state-sponsored discrimination and keep up with exploding technology.

Please, support SB 972

Sincerely,

Gary Osbrey

Putnam, CT