

## Senate Bill 972

Dear Legislators;

I am a 68 year old woman who surrendered her first-born to adoption in 1969. As I was an 18 year-old college freshman and "unwed mother", adoption was encouraged as the only reasonable, responsible "solution" to my pregnancy, and surely the most loving thing I could do for my child. I worked with a reputable maternity home to conceal my pregnancy, and with a nationally known agency to manage the adoption of my child. No one other than my parents, grandparents and my baby's father knew about my pregnancy at that time.

Eight years later, following my marriage and the birth of my second child, the burden of my secret and the pain of my grief and loss conspired to cause me to reveal the birth of my child to my siblings (both older and younger), and to speak out publicly (legislative committees, radio and television programs) about adoption loss. With the support of my husband and other women in similar circumstances I managed to overcome my pain and grief and to live a meaningful life in spite of that loss.

In May of this year the baby I surrendered will celebrate her 50th birthday. Although I was able to learn her identity when she was 9 years old it was not until twelve years ago that we began a reciprocal, caring, respectful relationship, which continues to this day.

I am writing as a mother to tell you that I believe that all adoptees have an absolute right to their original identifying information, including their original birth certificates, and that this right outweighs any expectations or assumptions of privacy that any mother may hold. In addition, in my experience, and according to the (literally) hundreds of birthmothers I have spoken or corresponded with in the last 50 years, not one woman was ever promised anonymity from her child by any adoption agency staff. Of course, these women (and girls) had an expectation of privacy, which is to say that agency staff would not "broadcast" their circumstances to uninvolved parties. But no one was promised anonymity from their child. In fact, in many cases the applicable laws at the time of surrender allowed that adopted children could obtain their original birth certificates upon request at the age of majority.

Please do not use mothers as an excuse to prevent adoptees from accessing their own birth information. Please support Senate Bill 972, and give adopted adults the same access to their (original) birth information that other citizens have.

Sincerely,

Gail M. Perry

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