

## TESTIMONY REGARDING SB 113 – THE 2020 ADOPTEE RIGHTS BILL

**Submitted by:**

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Dear Members:

I write to you today in support of SB 113 -The Adoptee Rights Bill, now before the Connecticut State Legislature. This bill, while affecting a small portion of Connecticut citizens, is an important step in recognizing and correcting discrimination of our citizens who are adopted people based on their age. This bill removes a limit that restricts access to birth records to people who were born before 1983, an arbitrarily-chosen year which does not now, if it ever did, make sense.

Access to original birth records reflects a basic human right: to know of one's origins and be able to access family history for medical and other reasons. There is no reason why these people should have to wait until their birth parents are deceased, especially since those younger than age 35 CAN access this information, and it is more likely that their birth parents are still living.

This issue is very personal and compelling for me. I was given up for adoption at birth in 1953. My birth and adoption took place in Massachusetts, where I lived until my relocation to Connecticut in 1979. I was very fortunate in that I was able to receive information regarding my birth mother from the agency that placed me, and in 1981 my birth mother and I met for the first time; we had a relationship that lasted until her death in 2018. I was able to learn so much about who I am, where I got many of my interests and characteristics, and meet someone who actually looked like me! My adoptive parents passed away some time ago, and my birth mom and her family became an important part of my life. She was able to walk me down the aisle in 2015 as I married my wonderful wife, the love of my life. She and her other children (my eight half-siblings!) have embraced me as if we had grown up together. Although she and my birth father did not have a significant relationship, she provided me information about him. He died over 40 years ago, so we never met, but I was able to connect with his family (siblings and children) and have a great relationship with them as well.

As I raised my three children (who are now in their 30s and all healthy) I was always asked questions about my family medical history as it may have related to potential health issues with my kids. Had it not been for my developing a relationship with my birth families, I might have not been able to provide the answers the doctors were asking for. As I have gotten older, I have found that to be more of an issue, and it is comforting to know that, while I am currently in good health, a time may come when having that information will be valuable in assisting in my continued care.

As I reflect on how the current Connecticut law might have affected me, I know that I would not have been able to meet my birth relatives and would have missed out on wonderful experiences and personal fulfillment for me as a son, husband and father.

As I mentioned, I was born, adopted and raised in Massachusetts. That state does allow access to original birth certificates for adopted children, and last year, I applied for and received my original birth certificate, showing my birth name and my birth mother's name and other pertinent information. It was a very simple process: I completed an online application, paid a small fee (\$20) and received the document only a few weeks later. I did not expect the overwhelming feeling I had when I opened that envelope and looked at the birth certificate; after all, I already knew all of the information it contained, and yet, seeing it on an official document gave me a real thrill. It was like I was learning all those things for the first time! I am including a link at the end of this testimony that shows that birth certificate.

While some may be concerned about the potential for violating the privacy of birth parents who wish to remain anonymous, I would reiterate what I said earlier: many of these birth parents are getting on in years and privacy is probably not so much of an issue anymore. In addition, some of these parents and the children that were given up for adoption may feel a greater sense of urgency to attempt a reunion. Also, current at-home DNA testing and search technologies make privacy less of a guarantee. In fact, this bill as written could actually increase the possibility that such reunions might take place.

Ironically, this access used to exist for all adoptees until a change was made in the law in 1975, as part of an amendment introduced on the floor during legislative debate. The Connecticut Legislature now has an opportunity to undo a vote that allowed for the state to discriminate against a segment of its population without reason.

SB 113 is a bill which, if passed, would have minimal economic impact on the state, but would have significant impact on the lives of many of its citizens. This bill has wide support and should be passed this year.

Thank you for your attention, consideration and support.