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Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 113 – AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO ORIGINAL BIRTH RECORDS BY ADULT ADOPTED PERSONS

My name is Susan A. Beauregard and I live at 84 Windham St Willimantic. I am submitting my testimony *in support* of Senate Bill 113.

We must allow adoptees born prior to 1986 access to their original birth certificates!

I was born in 1968 in Lawrence Memorial Hospital in New London. My mother gave me up for adoption at birth. I had been searching for her for the last 35 years. I didn't have my original birth certificate. I didn't know my biological parent's names. The only information I had regarding my biological family was on the non-identifying health history that all adoptees receive. There wasn't enough information on it to get anywhere in my searches.

It was frustrating. I hit dead end after dead end. I could have paid the Village of Children and Family \$650 for them to reach out to my birth mom. But there were no guarantees that they could find her. I couldn't afford \$650 at that time anyway. So I joined Facebook search groups, I joined organizations that provide resources for adoptees searching for their birth families and I joined Ancestry.com.

In 2015 I'd decided to do the DNA test that was offered through Ancestry. My DNA was matched with other people who had submitted their DNA into the Ancestry database. I didn't get any matches closer than 3rd cousins. I'd sent messages to the closest matches with no response. I then uploaded my DNA results into another database called GEDMatch. Once again, there were no matches closer than 3rd cousins and no responses to my messages. I was so frustrated and disheartened that I'd decided to walk away from my search.

I was thrilled when during the **2017 legislative session** S.B No. 977, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO ORIGINAL BIRTH RECORDS BY ADULT ADOPTED PERSONS was introduced. I'd called and emailed my State Senator, Tony Guglielmo and my State Rep, Doug Dubitsky to encourage them to support the bill. I'd also submitted testimony in support of it. I'd anxiously tracked the bill, excited to think that if it passed, I could finally have some solid information to help me in my search for my birth family. Any hope I'd had was dashed when the bill didn't get brought up for a vote before the session ended. Once again, I gave up.

In August of 2017, I'd wondered aloud to a friend if I'd ever find my birth mother. They'd asked me if I was going to try again. I'd told them that I'm going to see if the bill gets sponsored in the 2018 legislative session so that I could get my original birth certificate. I felt that this was the only way I could find my birth mother.

Then the most amazing turn of circumstances occurred. My older half-sister, who had been put up for adoption by our birth mother too, found me through Ancestry DNA. She had just submitted her DNA in July of 2017 in hopes of finding her birth father. She had found our birth mother back in the 90's and has been in touch with her all these years. It took us a few messages and confirmation from our birth mother to find out that we're sisters. I'd also found out that I have a younger half-brother, aunts, uncles and cousins. It's mind blowing how my DNA has been sitting in the Ancestry database for two years. What if my sister didn't submit her DNA? What if she didn't want to find her birth father?

Unfortunately, similar bills DID NOT PASS in the 2018 and 2019 legislative sessions. Had I not been able to have my DNA tested and if this amazing series of events didn't happen, I would still be sitting here waiting for Senate Bill 113 to be passed so that I could get access to my original birth certificate and start my search anew. I'm lucky, very lucky. There are so many adoptees that are still in the midst of their searches. Trying to get closer, trying to get answers. Searching and searching only to continually hit dead ends.

After 35 years I was able to meet my birth mother in September of 2017. This was a moment that I've thought about since I was a teenager. The first thing she said to me was, **"I was wondering if you'd ever find me. I've thought so much about you over the years. I'm getting older and I was wondering if I'd get to meet you before I died."** Wow. I was blown away by that.

I'm lucky. What a fluke, what an odd set of circumstances that brought my biological family to me. I'm enjoying building a relationship with my sister, my brother, my mother and all of my other relatives. My mother has given me the health history of our family. Now when I go to the doctor, when they ask about my health history, I no longer say, "I don't know, I'm adopted." I can give them the information I have about my maternal birth family. But what if this didn't happen? Without my original birth certificate, I would still be searching. I would still have many questions unanswered.

In December of 2019 during my birth mother's routine mammogram, a small tumor was detected. Upon biopsy it was determined that it was an aggressive form of breast cancer. By the time she had her lumpectomy in January it had more than doubled in size and calcifications were found in the tissue surrounding the tumor. ***Had we not been connected through a DNA matching service that I had to pay for, I would have never been able to connect with her.*** I would be living in ignorance that this very dangerous and aggressive cancer is in my family. I can now bring this information to my doctor when I get my mammogram done this year. I feel empowered and informed. Most importantly, I get to stand by my birth mother's side and support her during her treatment.

I am in support of **Senate Bill 113 – AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO ORIGINAL BIRTH RECORDS BY ADULT ADOPTED PERSONS** because all adoptees have the right to their original birth certificate. Here are the reasons why:

- No adoptee should have to fill out a health history form and next to the family medical history section their only option is to write "I don't know my health history. I'm adopted." There are so many conditions and diseases where family history is an indicator as to whether you are pre-

disposed or not. There are so many conditions and diseases where the frequency and type of screening test that's ordered is different depending on family history. Prior to finding my maternal birth family, I've been screened early for breast cancer and I've been screened early for colon cancer. My medical providers try to be diligent in their screening for other diseases because ***at the time they simply don't know if these diseases ran in my family.*** It felt like I was playing Russian roulette with my health at times.

- These tests are costly. It's contributing to an already expensive healthcare system. If I knew my family's medical history at that time, the tests would have been ordered more appropriately based on that history rather than sending me for tests, just in case.
- I am the mother to a beautiful 11-year-old boy. I'm comforted by the fact that his physicians are aware of my medical conditions and those of his father and his family's. We are now able to fill in the gaps for him in regards to the health history of my family. He is my only child. Prior to finding my birth family I worried what genetic time bombs, as far as his health was concerned, were lurking in his DNA that we were not aware of.
- Aside from the health implications of not having had access to my original birth certificate. I want to give you some insight as to what it's like being adopted. Can you imagine what it's like growing up and not knowing who you are? You know your adopted family's history and traditions because you are now part of their family. You participate in their religion and their culture. You hear the stories of their ancestors. There's always a part of you that knows this really isn't where you come from. I do know that my biological father is Filipino and Asian. My biological mother has filled me in on our rich English, Irish and Western European Jewish heritage. It was hard growing up wondering about my roots and my culture. As a teenager, as I began to form my own identity, I had no foundation, no basis to build upon as children who stay with their biological parents do. I looked around at my adopted family, whom I love very much, and felt that this really wasn't who I am.
- To some extent, my son had started to experience the same thing. He knows that Grammy and Grampy aren't biologically related to me. He asks me questions about my biological parents that at the time I simply couldn't answer. He has been so thrilled to meet his cousins, his Aunt and his Uncle. He is thrilled that he has another Nanna and simply adores her. He feels very connected to our birth family and has been eager to hear the stories of our relatives in England and the U.S.

In summary, I support Senate Bill 113. All adoptees born before 1986 have a right to their health history, a right to know their culture and their roots and a right to pass that information onto their children. I simply cannot see why any legislator would be opposed to granting all of us this simple right.

