

Dear Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Debate over whether the original birth records of adopted people should be opened to them as adults always comes down to a "promise" made to the women who relinquished those individuals when they were infants and could not speak for themselves.

Never mind the rights of those children, now adults. Never mind their need for medical histories. Never mind an innate, unquenchable quest to know the truth of their origins and where they fit into the tree of life. Never mind that DNA matches may find one's original family without state involvement. Never mind that television shows highlight the deep and abiding comfort that comes in knowing one's genealogical history, where even people who aren't adopted sometimes break out in tears when they learn about their long-gone ancestors. Despite the overwhelming reasons to do away with an outdated, selective, donut-style legislation in Connecticut--works for some, doesn't work for others--a restrictive law that affects a small number of adopted people remains on the books. There is that supposedly legal promise of "anonymity" made to mothers.

I want to scream.

When I relinquished a child in 1966, there was no "promise of privacy," it was forced on women like me by a law that was the product of a different era when shame and secrecy surrounded out of wedlock births.

I speak not for all birth mothers, but I do speak for many. But whether we mothers who want no privacy from our own flesh and blood are few or many, any such "right to privacy" loses all moral authority stacked against an adopted person's right to their own, true identity. Opponents of unsealing the birth certificates don't argue that sealed records are in the best interests of the adopted. Instead, they demand birth mothers keep a "right" that in reality was never the point of the law, and courts elsewhere have ruled is not constitutionally protected.

No other law exists that holds binding a contract between one person (the relinquishing mother) and the state over a third person (the adoptee). In doing so, the state treats adopted people as no more than chattel over which the state retains a lifelong bondage of anonymity.

No just government should exert such invasive and degrading control over any group of people, people otherwise equal under the law. Adult adoptees can marry, enlist, vote, get a driver's license, divorce, in short, do everything the rest of us can as fully functioning adults without anyone else's permission, but what they all cannot do in Connecticut is have an unamended copy of their original birth certificate. Not only is this social engineering at its worst, it is immoral and unjust. SB113 would restore the right of every adopted adult citizen in Connecticut to obtain a copy of her or his original, true, accurate birth certificate. The bill would build on a law passed in 2014 that has worked successfully and as intended.

Connecticut has come far in undoing the grave inequities of sealed records, and only needs to take a baby-step forward to finish the job. SB 113, An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Records By Adult Adopted Persons, should be passed without hesitation and with enthusiasm and due speed.

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