

Co-Chairs Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey and members of the Planning and Development Committee.

My name is John A. Gueniat and I am a resident of the Town of Washington. I am writing to ask for your support of SB113 --**AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATES BY ADULT ADOPTED PERSONS.**

I am also part of the adoption circle, as three of my older siblings were relinquished and adopted before my own birth. My two eldest sisters Yvonne and Jeannette located us when I was entering my teenage years, and starting in my late teens, I sought to find my sister June, who was relinquished as an infant (she was also supposed to be the family secret as my mother was not married at the time). I was finally able to locate her in 1998 when we were in our early 40s, reuniting my family in January 1999...4 months before our mother passed away suddenly.

Unfortunately last January we lost our sister Yvonne to cancer just 5 months after her diagnoses. She passed from this life never seeing her original birth certificate.

I became involved in support for members of the adoption circle in Western Connecticut, with a support group and individually for those who wanted someone to listen privately. I have also assisted in searches and reunions. I also was part of Ct Council on Adoptions' Search Committee and Committee to Promote the Rights of Adopted Individuals, serving as Chairman for 5 years.

For health reasons alone, adopted individuals should have access to their original birth certificates. Genetic health information is so important yet we have sufficiently handicapped one group of people from the ability to have current and updated access to manage their own preventative care. Soon after I found my sister, our father relapsed with colon cancer. My doctor suggested that all of his children should start early screenings by mid-forties. Often that is the case, but without personal, current information, genetic predisposition is an unknown.

In 2014, Connecticut opened Birth Certificate access to those adults adopted in 1983 forward. As has been the experience in the many other states, the sky did not fall. However, those adopted prior to this time, including my three sisters, who were adopted BEFORE the closure of access in the early 70's, are still excluded from access to original birth records.

In the past several years, DNA searching has become popular in ancestral research, often with unknown cousins and siblings discovering each other. This is happening with increasing frequency, to the point that it is seldom newsworthy. This can, and with little doubt has, created situations where a “closeted” birth parent may be outed to many, more so than if their relinquished offspring had access to birth information and contacted the birth parent privately. Access to the original birth information provides more privacy to birth parents than current Consumer DNA searching does.

Over the years I have heard people talk about a state promise of anonymity to birth parents. This could not be as the amended birth certificate is not created after relinquishment....only after adoption is finalized. Adoption is not guaranteed. In fact, you could have twins separated at relinquishment, one adopted and the other grown up in foster care. As an adult, the adopted twin would be denied access to the original Birth Certificate, the fostered **twin would not.**

There are currently 10 states that allow unfettered access to OBCs by adult adopted persons. In the northeast, Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island changed their laws a few years ago. Last year New York overwhelmingly passed legislation and the new law went into effect early this year that grants access to 600,000 individuals in our neighboring state. There is little doubt that this trend will continue.

In my experience with support of those in the circle of adoption, the need to connect with beginnings is strong, often necessary medically and psychologically. It does not make sense that a small percentage among us has to pay to scientifically discover what the vast majority of us always has access to. ORIGINAL IDENTITY!! Our current law does nothing more than to create an illusion of privacy for a very few at the expense of a great many.

In closing, it is my hope that this issue continues forward and that those who need access to this information are no longer barred from it and descendants of those who passed without access to their origins will finally see that truth. **THE RIGHT TO KNOW IS THE RIGHT TO GROW!!** Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,
John A Gueniat
New Preston, CT