

State of Connecticut  
Senate Planning and Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500  
Hartford, CT 06106

To respected members of the Senate Planning and Development Committee:

I grew up in Stamford, CT, the daughter of a mother who was forced to relinquish her first two babies for adoption during the "Baby Scoop Era". I am writing to urge you to support SB113, the adoptee rights bill.

Adopted people deserve to have access to the most fundamental information about their identity. Adopted people and their genetic parents deserve to be able to connect directly, not through commercial DNA services that compromise privacy.

I submitted my DNA to Ancestry.com a few years ago, mostly because I was curious to use DNA to build more of my family tree, but also with a tiny persistent hope in the back of my mind that I might be able to find a live half-brother who my mother believed had died as a baby. She believed he was dead because when she woke from a sedated birth and didn't hear a baby's cries, she was told by the nuns at the St. Agnes Home in West Hartford that he was born with such severe deformities that he would never be adopted. Later, when she tried to see him in the nursery, there were only baby girls in view, and she was told she didn't need to worry about him anymore and that he had gone to Jesus. She spent the next 50 years in and out of hospitals for depression and suicidality, believing herself responsible for hurting that baby boy by not taking care of herself during pregnancy.

A year after my mom's death, I got a "hit" on Ancestry DNA. A close relative, possibly a first cousin, the screen said. Born in 1965 at the St. Agnes Home for Girls. Not a disabled, deformed boy all grown up. A perfectly healthy, blond, blue-eyed, beautiful woman, who had been a healthy, blonde, blue-eyed girl baby when she was taken from my mother. She was happy and had a beautiful family and lived here in Connecticut, not an hour's drive away.

**My second sister could have found my mother before her death had she been able to access her birth certificate all these years since she turned 18.** My mother could have told her stories about her life, told her how much she prayed for her, given her important health information, told her about her father and their relationship, questions I can never answer for her. **But Connecticut law allowed my sister no access to her own information, and my mother died never knowing a day's peace in 50 years, never knowing that her baby was happy and healthy and whole.**

My mother spent the rest of her life believing herself responsible for hurting that baby, and that if "he" was not dead, he was institutionalized somewhere...she hoped and prayed every day that he really was returned to Jesus. Meanwhile, she also mourned the loss of her first baby, taken

from her by Catholic Charities when she became pregnant as a teenager. My first sister found us while my mother was still alive and the relief of knowing her and the opportunity to love her in person was one of my mother's greatest joys. But my mom was still haunted by guilt and worry about the other baby, who nuns had taught her to believe she was responsible for hurting.

My mother died at age 73 in Greenwich Hospital from dementia. Anyone's death from dementia is difficult, but some moments in her last week were pure torture because, in times of near-lucidity, she knew she was in a hospital and begged for all of us to let her hold her baby. She was back reliving the worst trauma of her life, over and over.

My mother was never promised confidentiality. The St. Agnes Home and Catholic Charities promised my mother many things that they could not deliver: that she would forget and move on with her life as if nothing had happened. That secrecy and isolation would be best for her. That she would forget. These were all promises not kept. But they never promised that her child would never find her if she looked someday. My mother never forgot. She wondered, she mourned, she grieved, she tortured herself, she ate and drank for escape, and she fought deep, disabling depressions.

I love my two sisters and I am so glad to be able to know them now - we talk and text and have even vacationed together. But every joyful occasion I get to share with them is tempered by the sadness that my mother never got to know all of her children and grandchildren together.

**When opponents of this bill claim to be protecting birth mothers, what they are actually protecting is a coercive and abusive system that taught birth mothers to be ashamed and to keep their pregnancies secret as if they had committed a crime.** Current law perpetuates pain and protects no one but the organizations and people responsible for the coercion and abuse of those dark days.

My second sister and I only found each other through the fluke of Ancestry DNA. But that was luck and a for-profit commercial DNA industry. **That shouldn't be government policy.** The first mothers of the "Baby Scoop Era" are dying. And many, like my mother, will die before their children have a chance to connect with them or ask about vital family medical information. **Many birth parents have died since this legislation failed to pass in Connecticut two years ago.**

Pass this bill out of committee on Friday, please. If you do, you are freeing adopted people and relinquishing mothers from a system that has caused so much pain to people who did not deserve it, most importantly the adopted people who had no choice in the matter and deserve to have access to their birth identities.

Sincerely,

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