

## Written Testimony on House Bill 162

### PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE CHILDREN AND YOUTH COMMITTEE

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I am a 25-year veteran of Adoption Search and Reunification. I am the Act 101 Authorized Representative for 9 Pennsylvania Counties, several Children and Youth and private agencies as well as helping individual requests from around the entire state. I am formerly licensed by the Arizona State Supreme Court as a Confidential Intermediary. I have successfully completed hundreds of adoption search cases, counseled probably 1000 people through the process, and have been contracted with by several of Pennsylvania's largest and oldest adoption agencies to provide Search Services to their clients. I am one of Pennsylvania's most experienced, skilled and knowledgeable Adoption Search and Reunification and Act 101 experts.

While I have always held a very neutral position with respect to Adoptees' rights to information versus Birth Parents' right to the confidentiality, I do believe that each time legislation is considered, there is far more representation of Adoptees than of Birth Parents simply because those who want to maintain their confidentiality inherently can't come forward to lobby and most certainly would not know they had a need to. This is evidenced by the fact that nearly every comment about House Bill #162 is written by Adoptees and nearly all of the letters that were allowed to be submitted to the last hearing were written by those supporting the bill. I was deeply saddened when I read them because I noticed that nearly all of the folks who had submitted testimonials had inaccurate information about their rights available to them under ACT 101.

I believe that it is very important that you have professionals like myself provide objective input to help insure a fairness to both sides of the debate. I am neither an Adoptee nor a Birth Parent but I have walked hundreds of people through this very emotional and profound process. I work most often on behalf of Adoptees who are searching for their Birth Parents. I make approximately \$1500 a year doing searches but likely spend far more than that promoting Act 101, so I am not making a living from Act 101, nor will I likely lose clients if House Bill 162 were to pass because the same kind of person who wants the help of an intermediary now, will still want it even if the law changed, plus despite the commonly held belief that everything is available on the internet, many Adoptees will be unable to locate their Birth Parent on their own. I believe I can provide impartial and valuable wisdom to the discussion.

Despite the fact that society as a whole considered Adoption to be a confidential legal process for everyone involved, proponents of open birth certificates frequently argue that Birth Parents were not promised confidentiality and that at some point access to the records was not prohibited. The general public as well as those working in the field of Adoption considered it to be a deeply personal and private matter and it was and still is considered to be a confidential process. After reading hundreds of the transcripts from adoption hearings over numerous decades, there is no doubt that the Judges intent of adoption finalization included a complete

breaking of any bond between Birth Parent and Child and that confidentiality was an element of that. They require Birth Parents to state that they understand this in their testimony at termination of parental rights hearings and questioned the caseworkers about the Birth Parents' understanding of this at the finalization hearings. **BUT, regardless of how one interprets the laws of the past, Act 101, passed in 2010, statutorily guaranteed that Birth Parents' confidentiality was indeed protected by Pennsylvania law!!! There is no ambiguity about that.**

The access to information that came about as of Act 101 has been a great alternative to closed adoption records because it allows the obtaining of information by Adoptees and Birth Parents equally without the breach of confidentiality. It allows Adoptees and Birth Parents who want to communicate with each other to do so. Parties who want to meet and share information CAN do so, but people who want to protect their confidentiality have that right too. This really serves **all parties fairly and equally.**

It has been my experience over the years that frequently Birth Parents want to protect their confidentiality because of how horrific the situation was that led to their pregnancy and adoption plan for the child. The guilt and shame that they felt at the time and often still feel to this day can be profound. Trust me. **There were no reality television shows like "16 and Pregnant" celebrating teen pregnancy in 1936. Laws that simply open the birth certificates because a small percentage of the population feels that it is their "right" should take deep consideration of the impact that a complete disregard for the promise of confidentiality could mean.**

Many Birth Parents have never told anyone, including their spouse, about what happened and it is cruel for the State to just say that that is just too bad for them. Imagine the feeling of being terrified all of the time that your confidentiality has been breached by a new law and that one day your marriage may be destroyed because the child you placed for adoption may show up at your house on Christmas Day or during a family event. What a horrible time that would be for acts of infidelity for example to be brought to light. It would be nice to assume that people would not do such things but unfortunately that is not unheard of by any stretch of the imagination. People absolutely do this kind of thing because they love dramatic things like that. While that makes for great Jerry Springer or Hallmark shows where the long lost Adoptee shows up on Mother's Day, it isn't good in real life or displayed for the world to watch on U-Tube. I think it is safe to assume that many Adoptees will show up at front doors with their friend in the background filming everything.

I have worked with several Birth Mothers over the years who were raped. None of them have ever wanted to search. They didn't want to hurt the Adoptee, but it was just too painful and terrifying to see a face that may resemble her rapist. No rape victim should have to have her injury reopened just to satisfy the curiosity of the Adoptee. Fortunately, it has also been the case that the several Adoptees who I have worked with who found out they were a child conceived of rape never followed through with the search for their Birth Mother out of compassion for her trauma. I always encouraged those Adoptees to register their information in the file or now with the PAIR in case their Birth Mother chooses to find them. That way, she knew they wanted contact but it was always to be on her terms. **An Adoptee who just receives the name of her Birth Mother from a Birth Certificate has no way of knowing that a rape happened. That is just horrific.**

It has been my experience that when Birth Parents have been located and they have been given the opportunity to share information or have a reunion that only 1/3 of the people choose to give up their privacy. About 1/3 of them will provide medical information and some background on why they placed the child for adoption, and sadly, the final 1/3 do not want any contact of any kind. **This means that a full two thirds of Birth Parents do not want to give up their confidentiality. Act 101 facilitates the desires of the folks who fit that first 1/3 of people but opening birth certificates completely disregards the last 2/3...the majority.** If you could hear the occasional terror in people's voices when they receive my call or the passion in the letters they write back pleading for me to not do this or tell anyone, you would really want to consider the wisdom of opening records without any consideration for or support of the people who become "victims" of what can happen after this. They say things like, "how dare you snoop around my life" and "don't ever contact me again". I had a person threaten to call the police on me and another who said she would sue me for having called her. I have had attorneys contact me on behalf of the person I had contacted to find out what their client's rights to privacy were. This is very serious to some people.

I frequently find that when I have to tell an Adoptee or Birth Parent that the other party does not want to have contact, they initially feel sad, but then quickly become defensive and angry and even though before the search they tell me that they won't pursue their person if they say no, they frequently still do. I would imagine all of the Adoptees who already used Act 101 and had Birth Parents say "no" to contact will now immediately access the person's name if House Bill 162 passes and will then make contact with negative motivations while the person who said no is innocently feeling protected by the fact that they were just guaranteed statutorily within the last four years that their confidentiality is safe.

Unfortunately, what will happen under House Bill 162 is that Birth Parents who do not want to consent will be retaliated against by having their names splashed all over Facebook and Twitter and will be subjected to public humiliation. Adoptees are free to contact any other relatives of Birth Parents and tell them who they are. They can call current spouses, or parents and children, even churches, organizations or employers of their Birth Parents and tell them of their Birth Parents' secret. This will have devastating effects on Pennsylvania families. When an Authorized Representative handles the case, they are bound by law to ensure that nobody other than the Adoptee or the Birth Parent receive any information about the adoption occurring or anyone consenting or not consenting to contact.

Many adoptions happen because of the involuntary termination of the rights of brutal and violent parents. Just having the name of one's biological parent leaves the Adoptee completely vulnerable to accidentally walking into what may have been and may still be a horrible and dangerous situation. When there is an intermediary involved and non-identifying information from the file, Adoptees at least have the benefit of some background information and don't have to be completely vulnerable. They can make an informed decision before jumping right in and knocking on the front door or giving their name and address. **Many Adoptees and Birth Parents stop their search after they receive the non-identifying information from their file that Act 101 provided to them in consideration of their personal safety.** I always recommend that both parties maintain their confidentiality even after a reunion unless they feel really comfortable, because this person, who may share their DNA, is a total stranger who may not have their best interest at heart or care about their feelings any more than a randomly selected person off the street. Even though your mind may have come up with a persona of what society says a Birth Mother or Adoptee should be, there is no reason whatsoever to assume that that is how this stranger will be.

This is not just a woman's issue. I have also experienced situations over the years where a Birth Mother will tell me that she lied about who the Birth Father was because perhaps she wanted the Father to be someone with a better reputation, wealthier, her boyfriend other than who he really was, or when the Birth Father was a married man. Until the recent ability to prove paternity with DNA, **one cannot assume that the man listed on a birth certificate is indeed their father.** What a mess that could cause for a man approached by someone on their front porch or family voicemail saying that they are their Father from 40 years ago when they are not. **I feel pretty certain that very few men lobby for confidentiality just in case they fathered a child at some point or are accused of doing so, but when someone calls their home and tells their wife that they are the child her husband had with a former girlfriend, they may wish they had. If you are named on a birth certificate, you are guilty until proven innocent with a DNA test.**

**An adoptee may feel an incredible sense of curiosity about where it is they originally came from and desperately want to know why they were placed. But that information is accessible with Act 101. It is not on a birth certificate.** Putting things back in Pandora's Box once it has been opened for someone trying to keep a long held secret is probably impossible.

Sometimes proponents of opening Adoption records will use the phrase that "opening adoption records is the trend". Only about 6 states have open records. With 50 states, that certainly is not a trend. The trend is to have intermediary programs and registries like Act 101 and the PAIR. Some states have opened some records for some people. They call them restrictions. In other words, some Birth Parents are protected while others are violated. Some Adoptees are helped, some are not. The fact that they didn't open all of the records shows that these states know that this is the wrong thing to do to people but they don't have the valor to say no to Adoptees, so they ease their conscience by only hurting some Birth Parents. That is just a total lack of courage in leadership. Shame on them!

Many Adoptees want to get a medical history and hope that somehow House Bill 162 will help to facilitate that. **Having a birth certificate does nothing for obtaining medical records or histories.** If an Adoptee wants a medical history they must do a search for the Birth Parent and ask them for it. As an Authorized Representative, I can usually get a Birth Parent who is unwilling to have contact to at the least give me a medical history, either verbally or in writing. If such a Birth Parent doesn't want to have contact, and the Adoptee calls, they will likely just hand up on them.

Proponents of House Bill 162 would lead you to believe that this law will benefit a lot of Adoptees, however please keep in mind that while it will apply to some Adoptees, it will not apply to the huge number of child welfare or Children and Youth Adoptions because those Adoptees already have their original birth certificates, it will not apply to Adoptees who were an interstate adoption (ICPC) because they would not have original Pennsylvania Birth Certificates, only Adoption certificates. It will hardly ever apply to step-parent adoptions because they already have original Birth Certificates. It would not apply to internationally adopted children, Safe Haven or abandoned children, black market adoptions, embryo, sperm and egg adoptions, and Adoptees who don't know they are adopted. That leaves a rather small percentage of the Adoptions finalized in Pennsylvania to benefit from this. Plus Birth Father information will most often not be available to any Adoptees including situations where the Birth Mother refuses to name a Father, doesn't know who the Father was, rape cases, incest cases, birth certificates with false information, and when the Legal Father (husband) was listed instead of the Biological Father. That leaves a rather small percentage of Pennsylvania Adoptions left to benefit from House Bill 162. Act 101 helps ALL Adoptions finalized in Pennsylvania.

When the State passed Act 101, DHS (formerly DPW) was required as part of the statute to advertise the new law and inform Pennsylvanians about their new rights, but unfortunately they have not been able to do that to date and so nobody really knows their rights. I have been doing this since the very beginning of Act 101 and have had relatively few cases from my 9 counties and around the state. In my daily activities, I never come across anyone who is aware of it, and it is always news to the folks who attend my classes and seminars. Disappointingly, many of the 67 county websites still say that adoption records are closed and that no information is available even though every one of the counties and private and public adoption agencies must have an Authorized Representative and provide the services. I periodically get calls from Attorneys who are still charging people to help them petition the court for non-identifying information, I have had countless people call me from all around the country asking for help because when they contacted their county, they were told things like they still need to petition the courts (they don't), they need an attorney to use Act 101 (they don't) and even that the county doesn't know what Act 101 is. If we would pull the momentum that is being used for House Bill 162 and put it on getting the word out about Act 101 to the County Clerks' offices, the Pennsylvania Bar Association, and the Commonwealth's citizenry at large, we could serve everyone.

Because Adoption Search and Reunification is such a big part of my life, and especially in the last two years or so that House Bill 162 has been looming, I often ask people "Should Adoptees be allowed to have their original birth certificate", about half of the people say, "sure", "why not, I would want it". But once I start talking to them just a little about why it was that many people chose adoption and how their most intimate and private information will be given to a stranger, then they nearly always change their minds about their answer and realize that they would not want that type of law being made for them. And when you mention it being publicized on Facebook, that usually solidifies their opinion. Everybody has something in their past that either embarrasses them or causes pain and the idea of a new law passing that allows that story to be told to their loved ones and the world, is pretty scary. I tell you this story because I hope that you will not vote for House Bill 162 just because you may think, "I would want to know if I was adopted" and I understand that opening up birth certificates seems like "feel good" legislation that will appease those who support their "right to know" but remember that behind ever Adoptee, there are two Birth Parents who could be deeply impacted and I ask that you please look beyond the surface of what seems like a simple stroke of a pen to placate the small but vocal group who are seeking this, and give consideration to those who cannot speak up to protect themselves out of fear, shame or simply not knowing that this legislation is being considered that will take back their long held guaranteed confidentiality and peace of mind. These are people who made the ultimate sacrifice for their children. They made the compassionate, respectful and honorable choice for their babies. To punish them now because someone is curious is cruel. Remember, the information Adoptees are seeking is available with ACT 101.

**The bottom line to House Bill 162 is this. It would allow one citizen to obtain private, intimate and personal information about another citizen against their will or without their knowledge or consent.**

**Sandra Bornman**

- 25 year veteran of Adoption Search and Reunification
- Licensed by the Arizona State Supreme Court as a Confidential Intermediary
- Full time Search and Reunification and International Adoptions Caseworker for Catholic Charities of the Harrisburg Diocese
- Independent Adoption Caseworker (Adoptions, SWAN Units of Service)
- Contract Search and Reunification Investigator for Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Services, Tressler Lutheran/Diakon, and York County Court of Common Pleas
- The Act 101 Authorized Representative for Adams, Centre, Dauphin, Franklin, Huntingdon, Lebanon, Mifflin, Monroe, and York Counties, CYS and Private Agencies, and individuals anywhere in the Commonwealth
- 11 years presenting trainings and seminars on Search and Reunification and ACT 101 for both professional (PA Children and Youth Solicitors, Adams County Children and Youth, Huntingdon Court Courts) and non-professional groups (Harrisburg Area Community College, Community Centers, Libraries)

Supplemental Materials  
Provided by  
Sandra Bornman

# Were you **adopted** in Pennsylvania or did you **place a child for adoption** in Pennsylvania?



Pennsylvania's new Act 101 allows Adoptees, Birth Parents and in some cases Siblings, Grandparents and Descendants to have an intermediary (Authorized Representative) assigned to them to obtain non-identifying information from the Adoption file and a search conducted for their biological relative WITHOUT the need for a court order.

Just contact the County Orphans' Court that finalized the Adoption.

Fees apply

Your history doesn't have to be a mystery.

For assistance or information contact:

**Sandra Bornman**  
PA Authorized Representative

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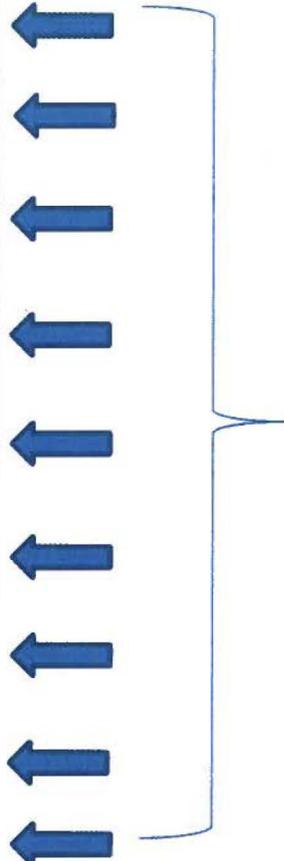
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PA ACT 101 AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

## House Bill #162

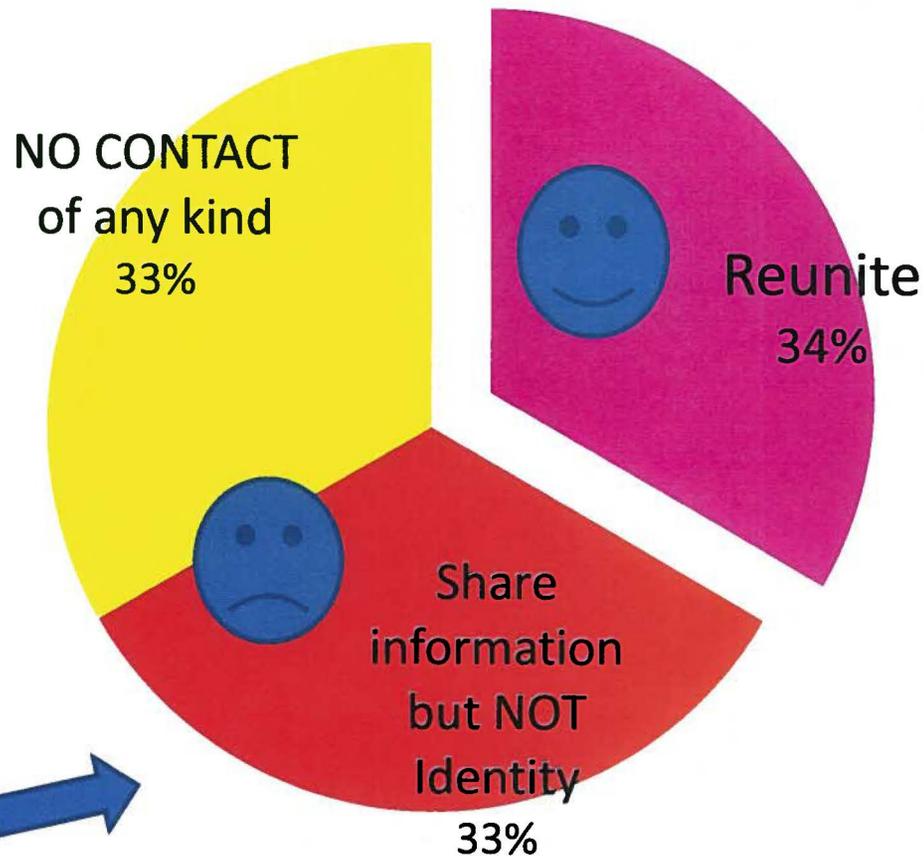
What happens to Birth Parents if it passes?	What happens to Adoptees If it doesn't pass?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The promise that was made to them some 20, 40, and even, 70 years ago, in 1985, <b><u>and again statutorily in 2011</u></b>, will be broken</li> <li>▪ Marriages could be destroyed because of news of infidelity that occurred decades ago.</li> <li>▪ Elderly women who made the honorable decision to choose adoption will be punished (again) with guilt, fear and shame (always looking over their shoulder)</li> <li>▪ Birth Parents could feel violated by the loss of privacy for this most intimate and private matter</li> <li>▪ Birth Parents <b><u>will</u></b> be subjected to public humiliation on Social Networks such as Facebook and U-Tube</li> <li>▪ Birth Parents may be stalked, threatened or extorted by Adoptees who do not want to accept “no” as an answer or want to demand something in exchange for not divulging the secret to others</li> <li>▪ Act 101 Birth Parents who said “No” and were promised privacy just within the last 4 years will have that breached and will be contacted by now angry Adoptees. The same thing for all searches from all of time</li> <li>▪ Rape, Incest and Child Abuse Victims will be once again victimized</li> <li>▪ Families could be hurt by long held family secrets of incest, infidelity, or simply relatives raising other relatives as their own</li> <li>▪ Birth Mothers could be in danger from Birth Fathers/Husbands who did not know or approve of the adoption</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: red; letter-spacing: 0.5em;">N O T H I N G</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">They just use ACT 101</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">The information Adoptees are seeking is available with ACT 101</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Including copies of original birth certificates in many cases with consent and their Birth Parents' name upon their death</p>

<p><b>What Act 101 Provides</b></p>	<p><b>What House Bill 162 Provides</b></p>
<p><b>In many cases, a copy of original Birth Certificate</b></p>	<p><b>A copy of original Birth Certificate</b></p>
<p><b>The story of why you were placed for adoption</b></p>	<p><b>The maiden name (most likely) of your Birth Mother only</b> Some counties will provide a last known address and an age, but some only provide the name</p>
<p><b>Equal Respect for Adoptees and Birth Parents</b></p>	<p><b>Respect for Adoptees ONLY</b></p>
<p><b>A professionally trained Intermediary</b> Statutorily bound to guarantee privacy</p>	<p><b>The opportunity to do their own search</b> With the ability to use any techniques they want to find them</p>
<p><b>Medical information from the time of birth and a search for medical history now</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>Facts such as whether Children and Youth were involved or if this was a rape case</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>The existence of siblings</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>CONSENTS to CONTACT</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>Access to items left in files such photos, jewelry, medical updates, and letters</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>Opportunities for Adoptees, Birth Parents, Siblings, Grand Parents to search</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>Information that can be used to locate and identify the correct search subject</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>The Birth Parents' names upon their death</b></p>	<p>←</p>
<p><b>Birth Father information in most cases</b></p>	<p>←</p>

**Not part of House Bill 162**



## Percentage of Birth Parents Consenting to Contact

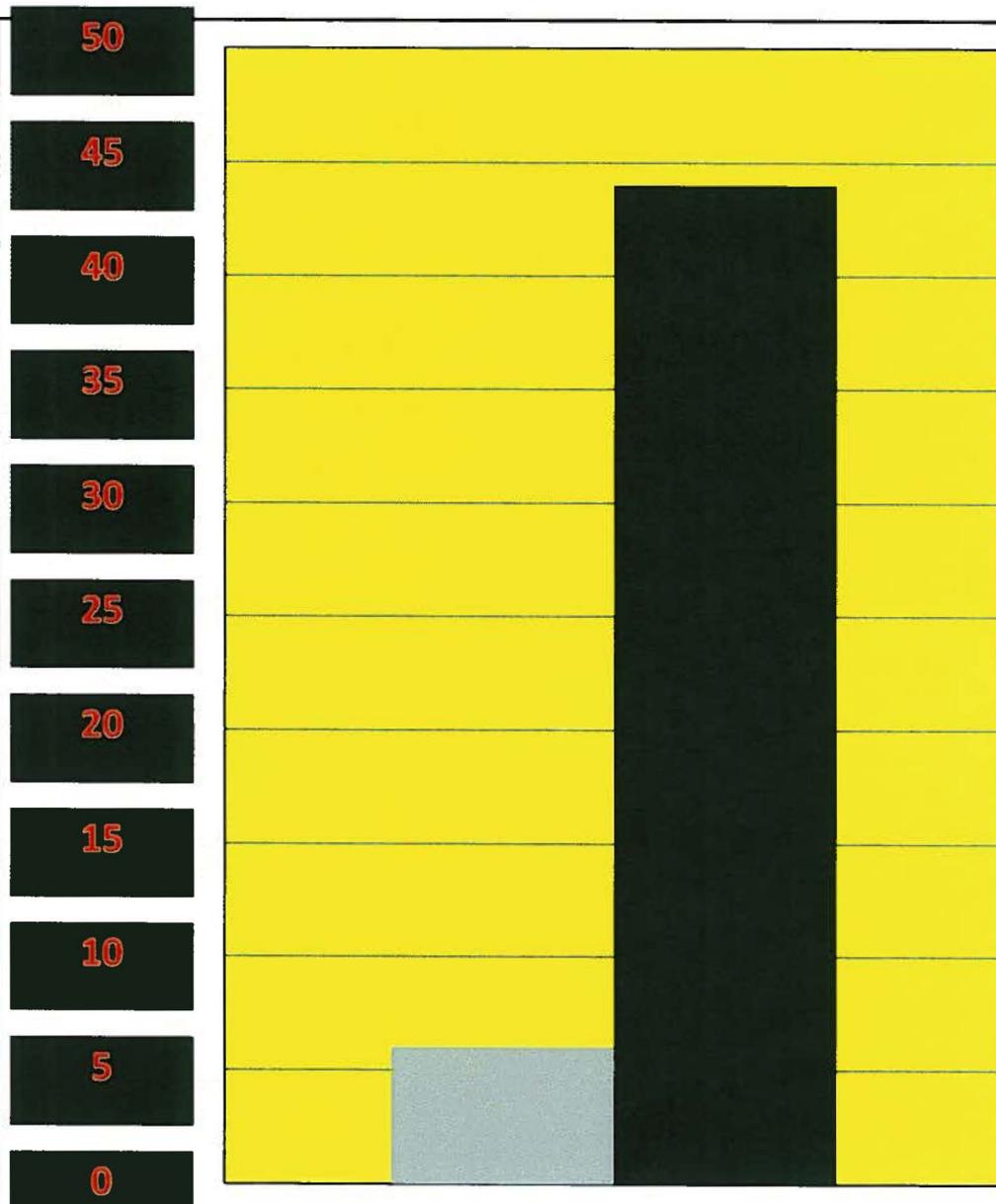


**Fully, two thirds of Birth Parents want to maintain their confidentiality.\***

**\* This information is based on Sandra Bornman's cases over the course of 25 years in both Pennsylvania and Arizona**

# HOW MANY STATES HAVE OPEN RECORDS?

STATES



**This is  
NOT a  
Trend!**

**States with**



**Open Records**



**Not Open Records**

The trend is for intermediary services and registries

**Obtaining a copy of an original birth certificate**

**will NOT**

**give access to medical histories or  
information!**

**Only Searching can do that.**

The original purpose of a birth certificate was to allow governments to know how many citizens they have available to them to use in times of war. It is now used to show the existence of someone....and who is legally responsible for them. That is why the legal father was listed, not the biological father. It is not to show who they were born to. Otherwise they wouldn't amend them.

It doesn't prove who you were born to. That is why it is not proof of citizenship.

People access Birth Certificates for school enrollment, passports, military enlistments, marriages, etc. and all citizens, including Adoptees, can do this.

**Everything Adoptees are seeking can be found with Act 101**

Including Birth Certificates in some case, the answer to “why” they were placed, medical information from the time, sentimental items, updates, consents, letters and pictures, the existence of older siblings, Birth Father information, reunions, and names after death

**Regardless of how you feel about if Birth Parents were promised confidentiality in the past....they were statutorily guaranteed it in 2010 with the passing of Act 101**

**Only a small percentage of Adoptees need or will benefit from HB 162**

Not child welfare system, inter-state, step-parent, international, safe haven, black market, or embryo Adoptions  
No Birth Fathers from unnamed, unknown, rape, incest, legal fathers

**Open records is NOT a trend**

88% do not have open records

**Medical Histories do NOT come from Birth Certificates**

**Act 101 treats Adoptees and Birth Parents equally**

**House Bill 162 takes the private and intimate information of one citizen and gives it to another citizen without consent or notice!**

**THREE MAJOR and BROAD ISSUES RELATED TO  
HOUSE BILL 162**

<b>The Human Impact</b>	<b>The Illegal Breach Of Promised Confidentiality</b>	<b>The Logistical and direct Legal conflicts with Act 101</b>
<p><b>Facebook/Website</b></p> <p><b>Harassment/Threats</b></p> <p><b>Paranoia and fear</b></p> <p><b>Guilt and Shame</b></p> <p><b>Broken marriages and families</b></p> <p><b>Rape Victims</b></p> <p><b>Child abuse victims</b></p> <p><b>Dangerous for Adoptees</b></p> <p><b>Front Doors and Holidays</b></p> <p><b>Wrongful Accusations</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Detrimental Reliance</b></p> <p align="center"><b>The promise of confidentiality was just statutorily guaranteed again in 2011.</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Giving one citizen private and intimate information about another citizen</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>One law says it is confidential, one law says it isn't.</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Everything about Act 101 procedures protects the Birth Parent' confidentiality. HB 162 requires NO confidentiality</b></p> <p><b>HB 162 will create a great deal of work/cost for Vital Records</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Record keeping of DNCs</b></li> <li>• <b>Authentication of those trying to opt out</b></li> <li>• <b>Confirming identity of those seeking birth certificates</b></li> <li>• <b>Confirming Deaths of people who had opted out (not just PA deaths)</b></li> <li>• <b>Cross referencing with Authorized Reps and the PAIR</b></li> </ul>

## **Detrimental Reliance & Promissory Estoppel**

Detrimental reliance is a term commonly used to force another to perform their obligations under a contract, using the theory of promissory estoppel. Promissory estoppel may apply when the following elements are proven:

- **A promise was made**
- **Relying on the promise was reasonable or foreseeable**
- **There was actual and reasonable reliance on the promise**
- **The reliance was detrimental**
- **Injustice can only be prevented by enforcing the promise**

Birth Parents understood that their confidentiality was safe if they choose adoption. This was part of the testimony given by Judges during termination of parental rights hearings. The judges specifically made sure that Birth Parents understood that the relationship was ended for all of time. In most cases, confidentiality was why adoption was chosen. That was the societal expectation of adoption and so it was "reasonable and foreseeable" to expect that one's privacy would remain safe. For many Birth Parents, the breach of this confidentiality will bring great "detriment" to them. Justice is only served by keeping this promise.

If a Birth Parent wants to breach the contract and share information or be reunited...they can use Act 101 and/or the PAIR.

## Realities of Lost Confidentiality

It was a Sunday afternoon and Robert who is 87 years old was sitting in his chair where he and his wife of 67 years, Mary, always sat to read. Mary had passed away 4 years ago. He had just glanced over at the photograph of Mary when there was a knock on the front door.

Robert slowly made his way across the living room and opened the door. A woman who was strangely familiar looking but unknown to Robert was standing out front with a big smile on her face. "Hello", she said. My name is Susan and I am looking for Mary. She is my Birth Mother. Robert was kind of shocked at hearing that statement and said, oh I am sorry young lady, but my wife and I never had any children. When were you born? Susan told him that she was born June 7 of 1952. Well, see that cinches it. I was over fighting in the Korean War, so she couldn't have had a baby.

Mary, who had sort of feared this type of response was prepared and presented to Robert a copy of her Birth Certificate. Robert put on his glasses and read the certificate. It did indeed say that the Birth Mother was Mary but the Birth Father was listed as being Joseph Rossi. Susan asked Robert if he was Joseph Rossi. With tears running down his face, Robert replied, "No". Joseph Rossi was my best friend.

It only took a moment for Robert to come to the conclusion that his wife had been unfaithful to him and worst of all, it was with his best friend. But the worst part of that story is that Mary will never get to tell Robert that Joseph Rossi had raped her and that she chose adoption to protect Robert from the anger and grief and sadness while he was away serving his country. She didn't want Robert to feel humiliated when he returned home to his community where everyone would have thought she had been cheating on him. Robert will now go to his grave with a broken heart and the agony of believing that his wife and best friend had betrayed him.

The McKenzie family was gathering to celebrate Thanksgiving. Three generations of the family had made it for the event. Colleen had been looking through some early Christmas cards that had arrived and opened up one that said it was from a boy named Christopher. Christopher stated that he was 19 years old, had been adopted, but had found a copy of his Birth Certificate in some old records he was going through after his Adoptive Father passed away. Christopher wrote that his Birth Mother was Elise McKenzie and that she had given birth to him in Jan of 1985 in Tucson, Arizona. Colleen, Elise's Mother was shocked to read this. She thought back some 20 years and did recall that Elise had been acting funny and gaining weight, but after she took a vacation to Arizona for a month to visit her Aunt Rita, she seemed to do a little better. Could Elise have actually been pregnant and went to Arizona to give birth? Colleen looked at the photograph that Christopher had provided of himself. He was such a handsome young man and looked so much like Elise. He had to be her child. How could Elise have done this to her? How could she have placed her grandson and sent him off to live with another family, she thought. She tried to contain her anger but as the family began to gather around the table, Colleen began screaming horrible accusations at Elise about what had happened. Elise immediately burst in to tears, ran out the front door and drove away. As everyone began to join in with Colleen's sentiment, Jennifer, Elise's older sister yelled. Elise was pregnant to Grandpa McKenzie! The entire family looked at Grandpa McKenzie in horror. That was the last Thanksgiving that the McKenzie family spent together.

**ACT 101 would have caught both of these tragic situations before they happened and they could have had very different results with the assistance of an Authorized Representative.**

## **REAL LIFE OUTCOMES OVER THE YEARS FROM HOUSE BILL 162**

### **1930**

*A couple is raising their child. She gets pregnant when she is 13. As a family, they decide that it would be best for the child if they raise the baby as their own. They agree as a family to do so and everyone goes on with their life. Twenty-two years later, the child is told by a neighbor that her sister is her real Mother. Rather than talk to her family, she requests a birth certificate and learns that her sister is actually her Mother. The child suddenly feels as if her life has been one big lie and she never speaks to her family again.*

### **1940**

*An 11-year old girl was abused by her married next door neighbor. When she became pregnant, her older sister helped her by helping her hide the pregnancy and place the child for adoption. The Adoptee has no idea of the story and stops by the married Birth Father's home and tells the story to his wife and children because he is so excited about having new-found siblings. The family members are horrified to learn this information about their husband and father. He then stops by the home of his Birth Mother who never told a soul about what happened. The scars from that memory are once again torn open and she spends the next few weeks considering suicide to stop the pain and guilt.*

### **1950**

*A young Catholic School girl gets pregnant to her high school sweet heart. Her family feels so embarrassed that they pull her out of her school and send her to live with her "aunt" in Arizona. Her parish priest, teachers and doctors all agree with her parents. She has to leave all of her friends during her senior year and gives birth to the baby all alone in a hospital far from home. Nobody comes to visit her and she receives no flowers. One day, while visiting her aging parents, a letter arrives addressed to her parents saying they are the child their daughter placed for adoption. Once again, the entire family is in conflict.*

### **1960**

*An Adoptee obtains his Birth Mother's name from Vital Records. His Adoptive Parents always told him that his Birth Mother was young and could not keep him. She had plans to go to medical school so he always pictured her as being a doctor. The thought of this always made him feel proud and confident. He sends her a letter asking to meet her. A few weeks later he receives a letter back from a man who says he is the Birth Mom's older Brother and guardian. He tells the Adoptee that his Mother was profoundly retarded and had been sexually abused by their father. The Adoptee feels a horrible sense of loss for his identity and has a terrible time making sense of how different his story is from what he had always imagined. He starts to wonder what the effects may be on him because of his Mother's disability and incest.*

### **1970**

*A man marries young and he and his wife have a child. The marriage breaks up quickly and when the wife decides to remarry, she begs her ex-husband to consent to her new husband adopting the child. The man reluctantly consents but vows to never talk about the child because he is so ashamed of his decision. Many years later he marries again and has four sons. He never tells his wife or sons about the story because he fears that they will think poorly of him. One Christmas Eve, one of his sons picks up the phone and is told that he is speaking to his sister.*

### **1975**

*A young television news anchor in her 30s discovers that she is pregnant. She is not sure who the Birth Father is because she has been casually dating several men over the last year. When she goes to her doctor, it is determined that she is much farther along than she realized. She is upset about being pregnant because of the impact it could have on her career. She decides to have an abortion. When she arrives at the clinic, she is told that she is beyond the date for which she can have an abortion and must carry the child to term. She is angry and decides to place the baby for adoption but writes numerous articles about how wrong it is to deny late term abortions. Twenty five years later, the Adoptee obtains her Birth Certificate and googles her Birth Mother's name. The first things that pop up are the articles of her Mother's denial of an abortion.*

### **1980**

*A girl gets pregnant to her "bad boy" boyfriend in a very small town where everyone knows everyone. When he finds out that she is pregnant, he tells her to get an abortion or he will kill her. She hides the pregnancy as long as she can then goes to visit a relative for the summer. She gives birth to the child and places him for adoption. Twenty one years later, the Adoptee can't locate his Birth Mom because she has a new married name, so he contacts the Birth Father in a letter that includes his return address. He is so furious to hear the news that he threatens the Adoptee and says he will kill both him and his "lying Mother".*

### **1990**

*A woman is violently tortured and raped in her home late one night. Because of how long the attack lasted, she got a good look at him and still occasionally wakes up at night from having horrible nightmares that relive the attack. She has spent many years in counseling to try to cope with the trauma and still finds it hard to control anxiety when certain things jog the memory. When the child was born, she never saw him because she felt scared to see the face of someone biologically related to the man. She lives a quiet life and never marries because of an intense fear of men. Thirty years later, she is sitting on her front porch when a young man walks up and introduces himself as her son. He has the exact same piercing blue eyes.*

### **2000**

*An Adoptee who grew up in a family who never had much money decides to pursue his Birth Parents. When he starts searching for his Birth Father, he learns that his Father is a local politician who is hoping to run for higher office. The Adoptee thinks that is exciting and wonders if his Father has a lot of money. When he contacts the man, he says that he is not his Father and has never even heard of the lady who is his Birth Mother. The Adoptee is angry with this reaction. He starts his own campaign to ruin his Birth Father's career and does indeed have a negative impact. The Birth Father's wife is very hurt and can't help but fear about her husband's fidelity. The Adoptee starts to wonder if he could get the man to pay him money to stop pursuing this. Eventually, the results of a DNA test comes back and show that he is not the Biological Father, but by then the damage has been done.*

## 2014

A 19-year old Adoptee wants to have a reunion with her Birth Mother. She gets her name from Vital Records and locates her Mother's address on the internet. She and her girlfriends decide to go to her Mother's house to meet her. While the Adoptee rings the doorbell, one of her friends is videotaping the event. When the Birth Mother opens the door, the Adoptee recognizes her as a teacher at her school. The lady apologizes but she has spent many years trying to get over the years of sexual abuse she was subjected to by her uncle. When she became pregnant to him, her parents blamed her and sent her to boarding school. The Adoptee states that it wasn't her fault that her Mother was abused and so she has no right to say no to her. Because she is mad and feels rejected she takes the video that her friend made and posts it to her Facebook page and is certain to share it with every classmate and current high school student she knows. By the time her Birth Mother returns to school on Monday, all of the students are talking about how heartless she is. Her school principal calls her in for a meeting.

**HOUSE BILL 162 HELPS SOME  
ADOPTTEES....BUT NOT MOST**

No Birth  
Certificate  
in PA

**Adoptees born  
out of  
Pennsylvania**

**Step-Parent  
Adoptees**

House Bill

**162**

**Child Welfare  
Adoptees (CYS)**

**Safe Haven or  
Abandoned  
Adoptees**

**International  
Adoptees**

**Rape**

**Unnamed  
Unknown  
False Information**

**Black  
Market  
Adoptees**

**Sperm**

**Egg**

**Embryo**

**Legal Fathers**