

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CHILDREN AND YOUTH
COMMITTEE HEARING

STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA

MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
ROOM 60 EAST WING

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2013
10:05 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON
HOUSE BILL 162
ADOPTEE ACCESS TO ORIGINAL BIRTH RECORDS

BEFORE:

HONORABLE STEPHEN BLOOM
HONORABLE FRED KELLER
HONORABLE JOHN LAWRENCE
HONORABLE WILL TALLMAN
HONORABLE LOUISE BISHOP, DEMOCRATIC CHAIRWOMAN
HONORABLE MICHELLE BROWNLEE, DEMOCRATIC VICE CHAIR
HONORABLE STEPHEN KINSEY
HONORABLE STEPHEN MCCARTER
HONORABLE DAN MILLER
HONORABLE MARK ROZZI, DEMOCRATIC SECRETARY
HONORABLE KEVIN SCHREIBER

* * * * *

*Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

HONORABLE KERRY BENNINGHOFF

COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

JOHN SCARPATO

MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND YOUTH,
RESEARCH

MEREDITH SCHULER

MAJORITY LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

DONTIE BROOKS

MAJORITY RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

ROSEANN CADAU

DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HEATHER WALSH

DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT

VALERIE WHITNEY

DEMOCRATIC RESEARCH ANALYST

I N D E X

TESTIFIERS

* * *

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ROBERT HAFETZ, MS/MFT, ADOPTION EDUCATION & FAMILY COUNSELING.....	12
CAROLYN HOARD MEMBER, AMERICAN ADOPTION CONGRESS.....	21
AMANDA TRANSUE-WOOLSTON, BSW.....	25
DR. MARY O'LEARY WILEY, PHD LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST AND CO-CHAIR, ADOPTION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE.....	31
HON. ANN M. WILLIAMS MEMBER, ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ADOPTION REFORM COMMITTEE.....	58

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

* * *

(See submitted written testimony and handouts online.)

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 * * *

3 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Well, good morning.
4 I'd like to welcome everyone this morning to this hearing
5 of the House Children and Youth Committee. You may have
6 been expecting Chairwoman Watson. Unfortunately, she's not
7 here today as a result of an illness. So I'd appreciate it
8 if you'd keep her in your thoughts. We anticipate her back
9 shortly.

10 Vice Chairman Moul is also unable to attend.
11 Therefore, I have been designated as the Chair of the
12 hearing today. So this is an unexpected pleasure but
13 definitely a pleasure nonetheless.

14 Chairwoman Watson will be monitoring the hearing
15 from home and, as I mentioned, I think we'd all like to
16 wish her a speedy recovery.

17 I would like to announce, I'm sure most of the
18 Members are aware of this, but this meeting is being
19 recorded. I would ask Members and guests to please silence
20 their cell phones and any electronic devices.

21 With that, would the Secretary please take the
22 roll?

23

24 (Roll was taken.)

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you very much.

2 As I'm sure everyone is aware, today we will be
3 holding a discussion about a Bill intended to give adoptees
4 access to their original birth records here in the
5 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The legislation that we're
6 here to discuss is House Bill 162, which has been
7 introduced by the good gentleman from Centre County,
8 Representative Kerry Benninghoff.

9 I'd like everyone to take note that in the
10 meeting packets today there are several pieces of written
11 testimony in addition to those of the testifiers that we'll
12 be hearing from today. With that, before we go to Chairman
13 Benninghoff, I'd like to offer Chairwoman Bishop the
14 opportunity to make some comments.

15 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Thank you very much.
16 And certainly my regrets that our Chairwoman is a little
17 bit under the weather. We'll keep her in our prayers.

18 Let me say for the past 30, 40 years adoptees'
19 desire to access birth records have been an emotional and a
20 politically charged issue. There has been public debate on
21 the issue for a number of years. Now, we are tackling that
22 issue right here in Pennsylvania with the hopes of
23 respecting the rights of everyone that is involved.

24 Years ago, there was a trend toward secrecy
25 because, as a society, our perception was different of

1 adoptees and unmarried birth parents. We're in the year of
2 2013 now and this all has changed. The progression of
3 closing records arose from the idea that families formed
4 through adoption should be more secretive than those formed
5 by a birth. I believe the right to know one's history
6 should not be revoked because of a person's birth date or
7 how a person was adopted.

8 Right now, for too many adoptees that cannot get
9 access to information that children who grew up with their
10 birth families often take for granted. So we are here
11 today recognizing that we must help others and ourselves
12 understand by allowing the opportunity to be open, discuss
13 freely, and then we hope vote it into legislation. I will
14 be waiting anxiously to hear comments on how you feel
15 before we have an opportunity to vote it out.

16 Thank you.

17 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.
18 With that, as I mentioned, the maker of the legislation,
19 Representative Benninghoff from Centre County, is here with
20 us today and Chairman of the Finance Committee.

21 Chairman Benninghoff, I'd like to offer you the
22 opportunity to make some brief comments to kind of
23 summarize the legislation and also to give some background.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Thank you, Chairman
25 Lawrence. I appreciate the opportunity.

1 Also Chairwoman Bishop, I feel actually humbled
2 to follow your comments. Very well done, as always, and I
3 appreciate that. I also want to thank the Committee for
4 taking the time to be here today.

5 While the legislation looks pretty simple, pretty
6 straightforward, and it may just be a simple issue to many
7 people, for the families that it affects, specifically the
8 adoptee, it's a vital thing, and I am honored that you are
9 taking some time to hear our testimony.

10 By way of disclosure, I should probably say that
11 I am an adoptee myself, as well as my three brothers and
12 sister, and my parents were subsequently blessed for their
13 kindness of adopting those four children and subsequently
14 had one of their own. So rewards come in many ways.

15 The issue at hand in this legislation
16 specifically, House Bill 162, is specifically saying that
17 adoptees should have the same access to an original birth
18 certificate as everyone else sitting in this room who is
19 not an adoptee. Ironically, in the State of Pennsylvania,
20 our foster children do have access to that birth
21 certificate, an original one, but we as adoptees don't.

22 And some may say, well, what's the big deal?
23 Well, it's a big deal because most of us would like to know
24 where we came from. As I was preparing for this today, I
25 was thinking about my own children, who I've been blessed

1 also with five children, and I was thinking about a book
2 that we have often read over and over, and it's the old Dr.
3 Seuss book that says "Are You My Mother?" And this little
4 birdie goes around and he asks many different animals
5 whether or not they are his mother and he even walks up to
6 this big giant front-end loader and he says are you my
7 mother? And while the book is cute and entertaining in its
8 own right, the ending of the story is you see the picture
9 with this little birdie who eventually finds who it is that
10 is his mother, and obviously it is not the front-end
11 loader. It is this cute bonnet-wearing bird.

12 And the irony of that story, I believe, and
13 applicable to today is I think we all inherently would like
14 to know where we came from and where we were born. Not
15 having an original birth certificate for a lot of people
16 becomes a blockade to that simple information. This is not
17 about invading other people's privacy. This is about
18 allowing all Pennsylvanians to have the same right in the
19 issue of fairness to the same certificate that the majority
20 of our citizens have. I personally don't think that that
21 is that much to ask.

22 I think Chairwoman Bishop eloquently said it
23 earlier, with the changing times, the access to
24 information, technology, the desire for us to have more
25 transparency in our life and full disclosure, this is a

1 good step forward in that and to me a fair step.

2 And two other things I want to share with you and
3 then I will go on because I think there are some testifiers
4 that have much better, more important information to share,
5 and that is personal experiences that those of us who are
6 adoptees go through or at least myself, and that is when
7 you go in to see a physician or you go in to have any kind
8 of medical procedure, you're often handed several pieces of
9 paperwork about your history, medical history, family
10 history. And year after year I would just write N/A, N/A,
11 N/A, N/A, N/A, not applicable on these different sections.
12 And one day it dawned on me as I sat in a doctor's office
13 thinking, wait a minute, it is applicable. I'm no
14 different than all these other people sitting around me
15 filling out the information. The only difference is my
16 government says I don't have access to that information.
17 It's still applicable. So I changed it to writing "don't
18 know" or "unknown." And the more I did this, the more
19 frustrated I got and thought, you know, this really is not
20 fair.

21 Subsequently, as I told you, I was blessed with
22 several children. Two of my children developed epilepsy
23 early in life, and, as some of you know, my daughter
24 developed cancer. And as part of my children's treatment
25 and other generations, one of the most inherently important

1 things, as somebody who is also worked in the medical field
2 himself, is family history. Adoptees don't have that. The
3 government says we can't have that.

4 And the last thing I want to throw out to that, I
5 found some interesting irony, as I shared with a future
6 testifier who was from another legislature about the
7 experience I had on 9/11 when I was actually coming into
8 our capital and was told I wasn't able to come in and at
9 the time I didn't know what happened. We all know how
10 security things have changed and how the desire and the
11 need or requirement for identification has changed
12 dramatically.

13 If you had a birth certificate prior to that, you
14 now are required to get a raised seal on a birth
15 certificate to legitimize your existence on this planet.
16 Well, that information is filled out just like your other
17 one was. The difference is, as an adoptee, I may get this
18 now-government-required identification to legitimize that I
19 actually exist on this planet in order to get a passport
20 over all the other array of issues that I need to have a
21 certified certificate. The only difference is is my
22 government, who's requiring me, is issuing me one that's
23 incorrect. I think that's wrong. I don't think it's fair,
24 and I think it's really kind of contradictive.

25 And so I would ask for you to listen intently to

1 the testifiers. This is not a major change. I think this
2 is a sign where Pennsylvania is trying to be fair about
3 access to information, and I think it's a good step forward
4 for the Commonwealth, and I'd like to join the other
5 roughly 50 percent of the States across the country who
6 have moved in that direction. And I think we could speak
7 volumes by doing that.

8 So again, I thank the Committee for their
9 indulgence and for allowing me to be here today and for
10 reviewing this legislation. Chairman Lawrence, Chairman
11 Bishop, thank you very much. And, Chairman Watson, we hope
12 you feel better soon.

13 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you. Thank you,
14 Kerry, for that very heartfelt and personal, those very,
15 very heartfelt remarks. I sincerely appreciate that. And
16 certainly your background in this area is unquestionable.

17 Today, we have the pleasure of -- this hearing is
18 going to be a little different than some that we've had.
19 We're going to have a panel discussion here of four
20 individuals who are knowledgeable in the field, Robert
21 Hafetz, Carolyn Hoard, Amanda Woolston, and Dr. Mary
22 O'Leary Wiley. And I'm pleased to say that two of these
23 four individuals happen to live in southern Chester County,
24 so I'm very pleased that they made it up here today from my
25 legislative district.

1 The way that we're going to run the hearing here
2 today is that we're going to give each panelist the
3 opportunity to offer some opening remarks for about 5 to 10
4 minutes and then we're going to open up the entire panel
5 for questions from the Members.

6 So with that, I believe Mr. Hafetz is going to be
7 our first testifier.

8 MR. HAFETZ: Yes.

9 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Very good, sir. You
10 have the floor.

11 MR. HAFETZ: Thank you very much. It is a great
12 honor to be able to come here and present my ideas about
13 adoption, about being adopted. My point will be to explain
14 to you why adoptees search not out of curiosity, not
15 because they want to, but because they have a compelling
16 need to search. This isn't simply a desire. This is
17 something that some of us must do.

18 And there is a process at work in us. We are
19 very different than non-adopted people. And my intent here
20 will be to explain how adoption affects us and this will
21 give you a baseline to understand the testimony that comes
22 after me and so that you can see how we are different.

23 And my presentation, it's important for me to
24 note this, is that in no way do I regard adoptees as
25 disordered or pathological or look at them in the context

1 of pathology. And we tend to be diagnosed a little bit too
2 much and it's erroneous, but that's another topic.

3 I am a marriage and family therapist in private
4 practice. I work with adult adoptees and adoptive and
5 foster families. I have extensive experience in
6 Pennsylvania's residential treatment programs and I worked
7 in the psych unit at Temple University Hospital in
8 Philadelphia.

9 Well, here, I'll work off the presentation that
10 you all have. In fact, it might even be easier.
11 Technology never seems to work when you need it.

12 The problem: Adopted children make up a higher-
13 than-expected proportion of children in psychological
14 distress. Adoptees are in psychotherapy at the rate of 2
15 to 5 percent, the expected rate is 1 to 2 percent for non-
16 adoptees; 10 to 15 percent are in residential treatment,
17 the expected rate is 1 to 2 percent; 6 to 9 percent are
18 identified in schools as emotionally, perceptually, or
19 neurologically impaired, the expected rate is 1 to 2
20 percent.

21 There is a clear tendency among adoptees not only
22 to seek professional help but also to need it. The
23 increased vulnerability of adoptees to psychological
24 problems can be explained largely by their experience of
25 loss, and that's what I'm going to talk about what this

1 loss is and how it manifests.

2 What creates this loss? Premature maternal
3 separation. Most adoptions, not every one, but when an
4 infant is involved or a child younger than age 3, there's a
5 separation from the birth mother, from the primal mother,
6 from the attached mother.

7 I'm going to talk about infant memory and how
8 this results in a disconnection between cognitive and
9 emotional, what we know and what we feel.

10 Adoptions begin during a critical period of
11 development. The theme of a person's story and the
12 fundamental success or failure of their entire life is
13 determined in their early attachment and bonding with the
14 environment. The primal mother is the environment.
15 Patterns of dysfunction in adulthood can easily be linked
16 to the quality of very early attachment. Critical period
17 is from late pregnancy to the second year. The brain is in
18 a critical period of accelerated growth. It is highly
19 plastic. Experiences are literally hardwired into the
20 brain. During critical periods, brain growth is
21 exquisitely susceptible to adverse environmental factors
22 such as nutritional deficits and deregulating interpersonal
23 affective experiences such as the loss of the attached
24 mother.

25 The next picture is just my favorite picture

1 because you know this kid's adopted. Every adoption begins
2 with a premature maternal separation. We call it adoption
3 but we forget it begins with a separation. Premature
4 maternal separation occurs during a critical period of
5 development. It significantly disrupts the attachment
6 process resulting in a disruption of the developmental
7 process. It changes us. The ability to adapt to change
8 and self-regulate as emotions is impaired. We learn this
9 from our relationship with our mother in the first days,
10 weeks, and months of life. We learn to self-regulate
11 emotions. She regulates us.

12 Long-term emotional memories of the separation
13 are created. This is very important and I'm going to go
14 into this in a little bit more detail. It creates the need
15 to transition the maternal attachment to a new mother,
16 which we do in adoption. But the attachment to the
17 adoptive mother does not replace or displace the attachment
18 to the birth mother. We simply have two mothers. We love
19 them both. And what I've discovered is that we simply have
20 no limit on the number of people we can love, only on the
21 number of people we can be angry at. That seems to be the
22 way we're made. So there's no need for this belief that
23 still persists that we have to replace an attachment. We
24 create an attachment in addition to.

25 The emotional effects of premature maternal

1 separation, parental bonding behaviors may be met with
2 anxiety, alarm, and anger. When you say I love you to an
3 adopted kid, he may become fearful. Rejection of the
4 attachment figure, paradoxical reactions to love, love can
5 create anxiety at first. Constant adjustment of emotional
6 boundaries, adoptees love to test, push, and pull, push you
7 away, put you back. They want to know if you're going to
8 leave them. The baseline emotions, and these are
9 unconscious emotions, our anger, shame, feeling of
10 isolation, incompleteness, and inauthenticity.

11 How many individuals are in this picture? Not
12 widely known or even taught in graduate school is the
13 process of individuation. At birth, there's only one
14 person in that picture, a mother/baby dyad. An infant has
15 no concept that it's an individual. It lives as a literal
16 part of the mother's psychology. In the nine months before
17 birth, it was a literal part of the mother's body. When
18 the separation occurs, we have lost literally a part of our
19 self. And so many adoptees will say I feel like something
20 is missing. I have a hole in me. I can't fill it. I
21 don't know what it is. There is a loss of part of
22 ourselves because of this intimate connection that we have.

23 Disconnected thoughts and feelings, this, I
24 believe, is the most important concept in understanding
25 adoptee behavior and solving adoptee behavior problems.

1 And adoptee can know he belongs but feel he's an outsider.
2 I know that I am loved it but I feel that I am not. I know
3 they will never abandon me but I always fear that they
4 will. I know I can do this but I feel I will fail. I know
5 I am with my family and belong but I feel isolated. I know
6 who I am but I feel that part of me is missing. These are
7 all common statements by adoptees. I have powerful
8 emotions that scare me, overwhelm me, and confront me when
9 I least expect it, but I can't put them into words. How do
10 I ask for help when the words aren't there?

11 The feelings that we have most of all is grief.
12 The easiest way to relate to it is grief. It's grief over
13 the loss of our mother because there is a memory of that
14 loss. And I'll talk about that in a little while.

15 How the disconnection is created, as adults, most
16 of our memories are stored, retrieved, and expressed using
17 language. They're explicit memories, pictures and words,
18 very clear. In order for memories to be encoded during
19 infancy to be verbally expressed, we would need to
20 translate out preverbal representations into language at
21 some point during development. Infant memories are not
22 stored as words but may be encoded in the mind as affective
23 schemas.

24 What's being said here is that an infant one or
25 two days old can make memory, and since the primary task of

1 an infant is to learn, you can't learn without memory. And
2 it is evidence-based, infants do record memory. What kind
3 of memory is it? That's the question. Since infants have
4 no cognitive ability, only emotional ability, their
5 memories, our memories, adoptee memories are coded as
6 emotions, as feelings.

7 We also call it preverbal memory because we can't
8 speak. These studies have also shown that it is difficult
9 if not impossible for children to map their new language
10 skills onto their existing nonverbal memory
11 representations. Children fail to translate their
12 preverbal memories into language. Adoptees can't express
13 their feelings in words. How then can they ask for help or
14 understand what they are feeling?

15 When we reach the age of six and seven, the brain
16 develops and we start to examine ourselves and we start to
17 look at these feelings. They may be triggered by the loss
18 of a pet, by literally anything, and that feeling is
19 intense grief that starts to come to the surface. But that
20 grief is located in our limbic system. The ability to
21 think and speak explicitly, that's in our neocortex. We
22 have brain systems that don't speak the same language and
23 don't easily connect with one another. That's where this
24 disconnection comes from.

25 The sense of grief is immense. I can't stress

1 this enough. Think of a loved one that you've lost;
2 multiply that times 100. That's what we feel. We've lost
3 the first intimate relationship in our life. We have a
4 memory of it. It's coded as grief, intense grief, but here
5 I am seven years old. I can't say I feel grief; help me.
6 There's no funeral for us because no one would even believe
7 us. There's no validation for what we feel so we tend to
8 act out and misbehave, end up in the psychotherapist's
9 office or in my office. I don't understand him. He's
10 angry. He has memories he can't explain.

11 Adoptees have emotional memories that can be
12 unexpectedly triggered, profoundly powerful, can be very
13 uncomfortable, and they cannot identify them with words or
14 know what they are. The struggle to understand these
15 memories can lead to behavioral concerns or dissociative
16 response, repression, push it down, push it away, but it
17 keeps coming back. This is one of the things that drives
18 us to search. We want to resolve the feelings.

19 When you have a loss and feel grief, you go to a
20 funeral, go through a grief process, and resolve the grief.
21 We don't have that. Adoptees have emotional memories that
22 could be unexpectedly triggered, profoundly powerful, and
23 very uncomfortable. We cannot identify them with words and
24 know what they are.

25 Any questions at this point, anything unclear?

1 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: I just want to cut in
2 for just a moment. We want to move along here with the
3 hearing---

4 MR. HAFETZ: Okay.

5 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: ---so I think we're
6 going to hold questions until---

7 MR. HAFETZ: Okay.

8 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: ---we've heard from
9 everyone. And also you're kind of over your 10 minutes.

10 MR. HAFETZ: I'm sorry.

11 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: We're not strictly
12 enforcing these kind of things but just if you could kind
13 of bring things to a close---

14 MR. HAFETZ: I'll move quickly.

15 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: ---we could move on to
16 the next couple folks.

17 MR. HAFETZ: I'll move very quickly. And what
18 I'll do is I'll just close with I have a case analysis that
19 illustrates my point.

20 Last year, a 74-year-old adoptee came into my
21 office in a state of despair. It was crippling despair.
22 He was tearful. He couldn't speak. His wife had to
23 literally speak for him. He was diagnosed with major
24 depression but none of the therapies or medication worked
25 because his diagnosis wasn't right. He wasn't depressed.

1 He was dealing with the grief over the loss of his mother.
2 He was adopted on the third day of life. He didn't
3 discover he was adopted until he was 12.

4 What I did for him was explained to him how he
5 has memories of his mother, search for his mother, and
6 then, well, she was 104 so she was deceased, so we found a
7 grave. And what I did was I brought him to her grave site
8 so he could find resolution and closure. And his
9 depressive symptoms ended. And this was all based on
10 implicit memories of loss because he was taken on the third
11 day after he was born and literally it was destroying him.
12 It was eating him up.

13 All of us don't experience it to that intensity
14 but it does tend to increase with age and it compels us to
15 search. We need to search. It is an extremely important
16 thing.

17 Thank you very much.

18 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you, Mr. Hafetz,
19 for your testimony. It was certainly very interesting.

20 Next, we're going to hear from Carolyn.

21 MS. HOARD: Representative Lawrence, members of
22 the Committee, my name is Carolyn Hoard. I was born in
23 Delaware County and currently live in Chester County. I've
24 been a member of the American Adoption Congress since 1998,
25 one of its past presidents, and currently a member of its

1 Legislation Committee.

2 I am the mother of five sons and daughters, only
3 one of whom does not have his original birth certificate
4 because I am a mother who placed my son for adoption in
5 1964. Despite the fact that I shamed my family by having a
6 child out of wedlock, moved a thousand miles away so
7 neighbors wouldn't learn about my pregnancy, and gave away
8 my own child, I have my original birth certificate from
9 Harrisburg.

10 My son, who did not choose to be born or choose
11 to be given away, who did nothing wrong other than to be
12 born to an unwed mother, is treated differently than his
13 siblings. Of my five children, he is the only one who does
14 not have a copy of his original birth certificate simply
15 because he was adopted. My son was born in Florida,
16 another sealed-records State. But had he been born in
17 Pennsylvania, the result would have been the same; he would
18 have been denied access to his own birth certificate.

19 My son passed away at the age of 37 without ever
20 having received his birth certificate. Pennsylvania-born
21 adoptees pass away day in and day out without ever seeing
22 their original birth certificate.

23 Opponents of this bill will tell you that birth
24 parents were promised confidentiality when they signed the
25 relinquishment papers. This is not true. There is nothing

1 in the relinquishment papers signed by mothers that
2 promised us confidentiality from our own sons and
3 daughters.

4 A few years ago the attorney for the American
5 Adoption Congress contacted the National Council for
6 Adoption and requested copies of any relinquishment papers
7 signed by birth mothers that promised confidentiality.
8 None were produced. I challenge anyone here today who
9 opposes this bill to produce one document wherein a birth
10 mother was promised confidentiality in writing. It simply
11 does not exist.

12 On the contrary, most papers take away from the
13 birth parent any right to the child. Now, when that child
14 is grown, opponents seek to bestow on us rights we never
15 had or asked for. In addition, court decisions in
16 Tennessee and Oregon have confirmed that there was never an
17 absolute guarantee of birth parent confidentiality in any
18 adoption. "To the extent that adoption professionals might
19 have verbally made such statements, courts have found that
20 they were contrary to State law and cannot be considered
21 legally binding."

22 Until 1984, adult adoptees born in Pennsylvania
23 were treated fairly and exactly the same as every other PA-
24 born person. They were permitted to apply for and receive
25 their original birth certificate. In 1978, the Office of

1 the Pennsylvania Attorney General issued an Official
2 Opinion stating that the "Division of Vital Statistics...is
3 mandated by law to continue making certified copies of
4 their original birth certificates available to adoptees who
5 have attained majority and are not incompetent."

6 However, after years of trying, a Pennsylvania
7 legislator finally convinced the General Assembly in 1984
8 that pregnant women would opt to have an abortion if they
9 thought their son or daughter could search for them 21
10 years later. His argument has been proven to be untrue in
11 the States that have allowed access. In Oregon, where
12 adoptees have had access since 2000, abortions have
13 declined 24.6 percent. The law also changed in Alabama in
14 2000 and abortions dropped 9.6 percent.

15 Two States, Kansas and Alaska, have never sealed
16 adoption records. In the last 10 years, four States --
17 Oregon, Alabama, New Hampshire and Maine -- have updated
18 their laws to allow unrestricted access to the original
19 birth certificate. In this 10-year period, over 20,000
20 adult adoptees have received their original birth
21 certificates. Delaware changed its law in 1999 and 841
22 adoptees have their birth certificates. Illinois changed
23 its law in 2010 and over 8,000 adoptees have received their
24 birth certificate. The Rhode Island law took effect just
25 one year ago, and in that one year, 759 adoptees have

1 received their original birth certificate.

2 Adopted persons are the only individuals in the
3 United States who, as a class, are not permitted to
4 routinely obtain their original birth certificates. The
5 adopted person's need to receive their original birth
6 certificate does not reflect negatively on their adoptive
7 family; it is simply a desire to know who they were at
8 birth, what nationality they really are, what name they
9 received at birth. It is a basic human need and one which
10 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has denied them since
11 1985. At least two Members of this body are treated
12 differently from other members of the House simply because
13 they are adopted.

14 The original birth certificate is considered a
15 legal document, a factual snapshot of the beginning of the
16 person's history. It belongs to the adopted person. As a
17 birth parent who placed a son for adoption, I support HB
18 162 and I urge you to do the same.

19 Thank you.

20 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you, Carolyn, for
21 that very compelling testimony. Thank you.

22 Our next testifier is Amanda Woolston.

23 MS. TRANSUE-WOOLSTON: Chairman Lawrence,
24 Chairwoman Bishop, esteemed members of the Children and
25 Youth Committee, and all present here at this hearing, good

1 morning. My name is Amanda Woolston. I have a bachelor's
2 degree in social work and I am a candidate for a master's
3 of social services at Bryn Mawr College. Actually, my
4 cohort has joined me here today representing some of the
5 best and brightest minds in our Nation's graduate social
6 work classroom. So I thank them for coming and observing.

7 So I was adopted as an infant through the largest
8 adoption agency in the United States and also spent some
9 time in foster care before being placed with my wonderful
10 parents. I am an author and speaker on adoption issues.
11 By the close of 2013, my work on adoption will have been
12 published in six books.

13 I am here to testify in favor of HB 162. HB 162
14 will restore the right of adoptees who were born in
15 Pennsylvania to access their original birth certificate,
16 that's the birth certificates that they were born with, the
17 same way that everyone else enjoys. And because I was not
18 born in Pennsylvania, I do have access to my original birth
19 certificate and the sky has not fallen in. And I am here
20 today because I believe that adoptees born in this State
21 deserve the same thing.

22 And I first wanted to quickly address the idea
23 that adoptees should not access their original birth
24 certificates because of privacy in healthcare. It's not a
25 common objection to this type of legislation but you will

1 hear it. So I brought with me today three Pennsylvania
2 original birth certificates. These belong to my husband
3 and to my sons. They have access to these because they are
4 not adopted. My private health information is not on these
5 documents or else I would not be waving them around in
6 front of you. And if this was a privacy and healthcare
7 issue, my sons and husband would not have these, adopted or
8 not. And my sons will certainly never have to ask my
9 permission to have access to them, so all I am asking for
10 is for everyone who was adopted in Pennsylvania to have
11 what my sons and husband has and what everyone else was not
12 adopted enjoys.

13 For me, it's not about search. Pennsylvania
14 already has a search and reunion registry. This Bill is
15 about what's fair.

16 By treating adoptees differently, we send the
17 message that we think that there's something inherently
18 wrong with being adopted. Adoptees, as a group, have been
19 proven by research to be resilient and successful people.
20 But when the default status of an adult adoptee's original
21 birth certificate is to be hidden from their view unless a
22 parent says that they can have it, we tell that adopted
23 person and their adoptive parents and their birth parents
24 that they all have something that they need to be ashamed
25 of.

1 I'm here today to tell you that I am not ashamed
2 of being adopted and I am waiting for this law to catch up
3 to the positive way in which I view myself and my families.

4 So we need to include in this discussion an
5 accurate picture of what the adoptee population is. The
6 majority of adoptees in the United States are stepparent
7 adoptees. These individuals are raised by at least one
8 biological parent. Statistically, that would be their
9 birth mother. The next largest portion of adoptees are
10 foster care adoptees. In Pennsylvania, the majority of
11 foster care adoptees are adopted by either their birth
12 relatives or by their foster parents. And these are
13 individuals who already know the adoptees' history. Also,
14 these adoptees likely already have copies of their original
15 birth certificate and that's because our birth certificates
16 are not sealed at birth or even at the termination of
17 parental rights. They are sealed when we are adopted, and
18 that could be months or years and years and years and years
19 after our births.

20 The problem with the law is even if you already
21 have a copy, if you ever lose it and you need it to get
22 your passport or driver's license or any other sort of
23 documentation, you can't go get it again. So that's even
24 an issue for these adoptees who are already likely to have
25 these records.

1 So when we talk about this issue, we tend to
2 focus on the stereotypes of private domestic infant
3 adoption, and we need to be mindful that even if you're
4 adopted as an infant through private adoption, it doesn't
5 mean you don't already know who your birth parents are.

6 So in reality we can't discuss this issue with
7 the idea that the stereotypes of private domestic infant
8 adoption are what adoption is because it's not accurate and
9 it's not fair. Adoptees are diverse and adoption involves
10 a lot of adoptees who already know who their birth parents
11 are. This discussion can't be about whether or not it's
12 okay to keep adoptees in the dark. It's about treating
13 adult adoptees the same way we treat everyone else.

14 And I have observed this House of Representatives
15 carefully consider regulatory policies so as not to
16 infringe upon the freedoms of its citizens. The current
17 state of this law does not reflect Pennsylvania's values in
18 this regard. What Pennsylvania is doing to adoptee birth
19 certificate is regulating them. It is placing unnecessary
20 barriers to this document that are not faced by anyone
21 else. And for what? The reason we implement regulatory
22 legislation is for the protection of the public. What are
23 we protecting the public from? From adoptees?

24 The current state of law exists as it does
25 because the 1985 bill sponsor, as Carolyn said, believed

1 that creating heavy barriers to accessing adoptee original
2 birth certificates would lower abortion rates. This was
3 not empirically supported then, and it's not supported now.
4 This legislation does not increase abortion rates and it
5 does not cause a drop in adoption rates.

6 In the House Journal discussion of the 1985 law
7 change to the registry systems, you will find over and over
8 again mentions of adoptees don't need access and adoptees
9 don't really deserve access. How did this honor our
10 Commonwealth's adopted youth and adults? How did it tell
11 them that they are valuable? I ask you to reflect on this.

12 As I said, the current state of law was
13 implemented for the very specific reason of lowering
14 abortion rates, and we know now that this just doesn't make
15 sense and we've known this for some time. Yet, why did we
16 not immediately reverse the law back to the way it once was
17 once we knew these things? Very simply, we did not follow
18 up. And every year that goes by that we fail to follow up
19 and fix this law is another year that we send the message
20 that it's just not important enough. We cannot send these
21 negative messages any longer.

22 And this is why I'm so grateful that we're having
23 this hearing today. With this hearing, you are following
24 up. You are sending the message to adopted people in
25 Pennsylvania and to their families that they matter to you

1 and to this State.

2 Today, we are following up. Now, let's follow
3 through. I urge you to support HB 162 and recommend it to
4 the House for a vote today.

5 Thank you for your time.

6 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you, Amanda.
7 Thank you very much. Your passion is evident. Thank you.

8 Our next testifier is Dr. Mary O'Leary Wiley.
9 You have the floor.

10 DR. O'LEARY WILEY: Thank you. I was going to
11 use PowerPoint but the nature of the hearing is such that
12 I'm going to skip that.

13 Chairman Lawrence, Chairperson Bishop, and all
14 members of the House Committee on Children and Youth, my
15 name is Mary O'Leary Wiley and I am from Altoona,
16 Pennsylvania, where I practice full-time as a licensed
17 psychologist in my hometown. As a matter of background, I
18 attended Villanova University for two years, graduated from
19 Penn State in psychology, and did my master's and doctoral
20 work at the University of Maryland in counseling
21 psychology.

22 I am Co-Chair of the Special Interest Group on
23 Adoption Research and Practice within the American
24 Psychological Association, a group I cofounded in 2005.
25 It's the only voice related to adoption within the American

1 Psychological Association.

2 I, along with my colleague Amanda Baden, who
3 happens to be a Harrisburg native, and others, have
4 published several integrative reviews of the research
5 literature in APA journals on counseling people whose lives
6 are touched by adoption, including adoptees, original
7 families, and adoptive families. I cofounded the Center
8 for Adoption Education of Central Pennsylvania, a group
9 that serves as a resource to Central Pennsylvanians whose
10 lives are touched by adoption. I've done keynotes at
11 several national conferences including Resolve, the Barker
12 Foundation, and the American Adoption Congress, most
13 typically on growing up adopted. This is my first foray
14 into the legal venue.

15 In my practice, I have provided psychological
16 services to hundreds of clients whose lives are touched by
17 adoption. That's my professional background related to
18 adoption and there's more on my website of other things
19 that I've done, which is on the testimony.

20 As a matter of personal background, I was adopted
21 by my parents, James and Patricia O'Leary, at six months of
22 age. I happened to be born in Minnesota. My dad at the
23 time was a surgical resident at the Mayo Clinic. We moved
24 home to Altoona when I was a year old so he could practice
25 surgery in his hometown, which he did until his death in

1 1982. My mom died only four years ago and I am blessed to
2 have been able to spend time with her daily since I live
3 only a few blocks away from her.

4 My parents were both supporters of adoptee rights
5 and they would be very proud that I have the opportunity to
6 be here today. In fact, whenever I was about six years
7 old, we were on television. From anybody who's near
8 Altoona, we were on the Big John Riley Show as an adoptive
9 family. And at the time people were slightly scandalized
10 because it was supposed to be a secret that people are
11 adopted. So they were pretty avant-garde in their approach
12 to being non-shameful about adoption. I am deeply honored
13 to have the opportunity today to speak on a topic that's so
14 near to my heart.

15 I am the oldest of the three adopted O'Leary
16 children. My brother Denis, who is two years younger than
17 I am, was adopted at 10 days of age and came to us straight
18 from Mercy Hospital in Altoona. My brother John, who's
19 three years younger than I am, was adopted at two years of
20 age, and I clearly remember picking him up from the
21 orphanage in Cresson. I was five at the time. After John
22 had walked across a big room in a blazer and a tie to where
23 my mom, dad, my brother and I were sitting on a sofa, the
24 Sister said to him, Anthony, your name will now be John,
25 and this is your new family. He started to cry and I guess

1 I was empathic early. I started to cry and even then I
2 knew something was very wrong in erasing a child's history
3 and a child's identity. As we were growing up, John always
4 asked me to tell that story over and over and over, and I
5 realize now that it was his only tie to the first two years
6 of his life.

7 My brother is still the closest person in the
8 world to me, along with my husband and three kids, and it's
9 on behalf of my family that I became a psychologist whose
10 practice and research focuses on adoption.

11 It is well known in adoption circles that somehow
12 it seems that adopted children never grow up. We're sort
13 of the Peter Pans of society. We are treated as children
14 for the rest of our lives. Our adoption as children
15 defines us. The law treats us as children. I am 59 years
16 old and I am testifying today in front of the Committee on
17 Children and Youth about a law that has an effect on my
18 adult clients and my adult brothers, who were born in
19 Pennsylvania. In psychodynamic jargon, this is referred to
20 as infantilization: the treating of adults like infants.

21 Knowing the truth about oneself, as everyone has
22 said, is part of healthy emotional development for all
23 people. Recently, I had a client who was seeking
24 information about herself from Catholic Charities, the
25 agency she had been adopted through. Now, I have been on

1 the Board of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Altoona-
2 Johnstown for the last 12 years, I was Chair for 6 years,
3 and their Executive Director, Jean Johnstone, is a close
4 colleague and friend of mine. She came to my office and
5 was nervous about telling my client the circumstances of
6 her birth, which were quite challenging. I understand
7 this. But I assured Jean that no matter what the truth is,
8 it is far better than the millions of other scenarios that
9 run through adoptees' minds. My client was incredibly
10 grateful for this information and so appreciative for
11 information, any information, about herself.

12 Adoption is a lifelong process. Lack of
13 knowledge about oneself affects people differently at
14 different stages of their lives. When I was young I wanted
15 to know who I looked like. When I was a teen I wanted to
16 know medical information. When I was a bit older I wanted
17 information to help my children.

18 At this stage of my life, I am most concerned
19 about the principles upon which adoption is based. I would
20 like adoption and all the structures within our
21 Commonwealth to be based on principles of which we can be
22 proud, principles such as honesty and integrity, principles
23 such as care for the well-being of all the citizens in our
24 Commonwealth, principles such as positive attitudes toward
25 adoption and all those whose lives are touched by adoption.

1 And most of all, I would like our principles about adoption
2 to never, ever be based on shame.

3 I'm afraid that our current legal structure
4 around adoption is not fully based on these principles.
5 Adoptees, as you have heard, are the only class of people
6 to be denied information about themselves by the
7 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. They are denied their
8 original birth certificate. If they are under the age of
9 18, their parents are denied their original birth
10 certificate. Original birth certificates are denied to
11 adoptees from stepparent and older children public
12 adoptions.

13 HB 162 would change this. HB 162 would help
14 adoptive families to have accurate information to help
15 their children. It would help adult adoptees to have
16 accurate information about themselves, and it would allow
17 positive principles to serve as the foundation of our
18 adoption laws.

19 I am asking each of you to recommend HB 162 to
20 the House of Representatives for a vote. I believe it's
21 the right thing to do. Every person born in Pennsylvania
22 should have the right of access to information about
23 themselves without government intrusion, even adoptees.

24 Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak
25 with you today.

1 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you, Dr. O'Leary
2 Wiley. I appreciate your testimony.

3 With that, we are going to open it up for
4 questions. And I'd like to take the opportunity to ask the
5 first question if I could. And anybody can chime in, so
6 feel free.

7 The testimony that we heard today was that the
8 law in Pennsylvania was changed in 1984, and prior to that,
9 the law related and spoke to the issue. And 1984 certainly
10 is a little bit ago but it's not 1940, so my question is it
11 seems from the testimony that's been presented today that a
12 number of other States have passed laws that provide
13 additional access for adoptees' birth certificates in the
14 recent years. I guess my question is have there been any
15 States that have gone in the opposite direction? Was
16 Pennsylvania the last one to pass a law like this in 1984
17 or have there been others more recently that have kind of
18 gone in the other direction?

19 MS. HOARD: Alabama, which changed its law in
20 2000, had sealed records probably just 10 or 15 years,
21 maybe 20 years earlier than that. So Alabama was probably
22 the latest State to close its records but it has then in
23 2000 opened them again.

24 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Okay. Thank you.
25 Chairman Bishop?

1 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Thank you very much.

2 Medically, we have come a long way and I want to
3 make sure I understand this correctly. Are you saying that
4 we cannot look at a child's medical records to find out if
5 there are any kind of diseases that has possibly affected
6 them and they don't know where they come from or what they
7 might be?

8 MS. TRANSUE-WOOLSTON: For this piece of
9 legislation specifically, it's just the original birth
10 certificate. So accessing the original birth certificate
11 is probably not going to give you much health information,
12 only if you're able to look at genealogy and maybe see what
13 your ancestors had passed away from from obituaries. There
14 is a medical history registry the Pennsylvania has, and I
15 do think that that could be improved to increase the flow
16 of information. But through this Bill specifically, it
17 would basically be genealogy where would we be getting our
18 information.

19 For me, when I was adopted, I did not come with
20 any medical records whatsoever other than maybe some of my
21 infant vaccinations. And so I had to wait until I was 24
22 years old before I found anything out.

23 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Thank you.

24 MR. HAFETZ: I'd like to answer your question
25 also.

1 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Yes.

2 MR. HAFETZ: Most medical problems arise later in
3 life. I had no medical records all my life. My mother
4 died of heart disease at 43 and my brother, who also
5 unknown to me until later in life, died at 41 of heart
6 disease. I have this same heart disease. It doesn't
7 respond to traditional therapies. I don't even know why
8 I'm here. But if I had known early, it would have been
9 very important. It's just by the luck of the draw.

10 But the records at the time of the adoption are
11 going to be inadequate because everybody is young and we
12 don't see things surface until 10, 20, 30, 40 years later.

13 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Thank you.

14 DR. O'LEARY WILEY: My experience with medical
15 records is it varies a good bit depending on the agency
16 that does the adoption. Each State's Department of
17 Children and Youth decides what medical records to pass
18 through. In the case of infant adoption, it depends on the
19 agency. Nevertheless, HB 162 doesn't really address that
20 issue. And as Amanda has said, that's already covered
21 through a medical registry.

22 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Okay. Thank you.

23 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: I'd like to recognize
24 Chairman Benninghoff.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Thank you. By no

1 means do I consider myself an expert, but one thing I would
2 say, while we specifically don't address these specific
3 issues in 162, what it does do if you have access to
4 information, knowing who your parents are, there are
5 voluntary abilities for those people to provide you medical
6 history.

7 As somebody who worked in a hospital, many times
8 also served as county coroner, one of the things that we
9 see very consistent is the importance of medical histories
10 for treating current illnesses, symptoms, and diseases. So
11 I think, if nothing else, it becomes an opportunity or a
12 gateway to have people have access to that information
13 through future research.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: All right.
16 Representative Bloom.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BLOOM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 And I do want to thank all the witnesses who
19 testified this morning. It's been very compelling
20 testimony, very helpful, and also to Chairman Benninghoff
21 for sponsoring the bill and for sharing your story.

22 I'm supporting the Bill. I have constituents in
23 my district for whom this is a very important issue, and
24 I'm very supportive. I just did have one question of, I
25 guess, follow-up for Professor Hafetz.

1 And there was something said in your presentation
2 that bothered me a little bit here and I just wanted to
3 give you an opportunity to perhaps clarify that a little
4 bit for the record for anyone who's watching this hearing.
5 You showed the slide of the mother with the child and you
6 seemed to indicate that there was only one individual in
7 that picture, and I just want to make sure you didn't mean
8 to imply that from a moral or a legal perspective that that
9 child is not a wholly distinct human individual in that
10 photograph of the mother and the baby?

11 MR. HAFETZ: No. I was referring to the theory
12 of individuation which was put forth by Margaret Mahler.
13 And what we found in testing infants, and you can show an
14 infant its reflection in a mirror and it has a cookie and
15 it will reach for the infant's in the mirror cookie because
16 it doesn't realize it's itself. Individuation is self-
17 awareness.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BLOOM: So it's an awareness
19 issue, not a moral or legal---

20 MR. HAFETZ: Correct, a psychological issue
21 purely, yes.

22 REPRESENTATIVE BLOOM: Okay. Thank you very
23 much, Professor.

24 MR. HAFETZ: Sure.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BLOOM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Representative Kinsey.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 I also want to thank Chairman Benninghoff for
4 sponsoring this legislation. I, too, look forward to
5 supporting this legislation. And I want to thank the
6 testifiers for coming here today and sharing the
7 information, compelling information, which was, as I talked
8 with some of my colleagues sitting beside me. I mean we
9 were just sitting in awe listening to your testimony so I
10 want to thank each and every one of you for coming here
11 this morning.

12 I just have two questions, Mr. Chairman, if I
13 may. The first question, and I can direct this towards
14 Ms. Carolyn Hoard or any member of the panel, approximately
15 how many folks in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are
16 impacted by this current law? Do you have an estimation of
17 roughly how many folks?

18 MS. HOARD: I don't have an estimation of that.
19 I don't know whether Amanda or Mary would have that. I
20 know that I worked in Delaware a few years and we worked to
21 change the law down there and we did get a number of
22 adoptions in Delaware but they didn't even differentiate
23 between stepparent and foster parent and infant adoptions.
24 So I would assume if we contacted the division of vital
25 records, they could tell us how many sealed records they

1 have---

2 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay.

3 MS. HOARD: ---but they wouldn't be able to break
4 it down for us.

5 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay. In regards to
6 stepparent or foster and so forth?

7 MS. HOARD: Correct.

8 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay. Great. Thank you.

9 My next question, Mr. Chairman, is towards
10 Professor Hafetz. Your slide was very interesting and
11 actually it shared a lot of information, and it spun a
12 different thought process within me. I think it was on
13 page 4 or maybe not page 4 but when you actually talked
14 about baseline emotions and you talked about anger, shame,
15 isolation. And I have a two-part question. Does guilt
16 play a part in this also? Again, I've not really had
17 experience working with adoption agencies or with things of
18 that nature, but when you were naming some of the baseline
19 emotions, I started thinking about guilt. Does guilt play
20 a part? Like do you find---

21 MR. HAFETZ: Guilt and shame sometimes are very
22 close but they're not the same.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay.

24 MR. HAFETZ: What happens, children, before the
25 age of five, we tend to think of them -- they're normally

1 egocentric. Everything that happens happens to them, for
2 them, because of them. It's their fault. So adoptees
3 commonly will take on the belief that I wasn't good enough.
4 That's why my mother gave me up. That creates shame, that
5 sense of shame. I'm the problem. My existence is the
6 problem, not what I do, which is guilt. It's normal
7 egocentric thinking. So you'll find adoptees who have this
8 feeling I'm not worthy. My mother wouldn't keep me. Or
9 they may develop, well, I'll be perfect in my adoptive
10 family and she'll take me back. They become
11 perfectionists, too.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: So let's say when you
13 have the whole family that's adopted -- I know that
14 Chairman Benninghoff shared his story -- and so when you
15 have maybe other siblings and you all go to the same
16 family, is there a support built in amongst the siblings
17 because of the fact that they're all being adopted by the
18 same family or is that still like individualized where
19 they---

20 MR. HAFETZ: It's individualized.

21 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: It still is? Okay.

22 MR. HAFETZ: Adoptees do tend to bond, which is
23 really interesting because those of us who are attachment-
24 compromised trust each other and almost bond instantly with
25 each other.

1 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay.

2 MR. HAFETZ: But family dynamics are so
3 different. You could have two adoptees that don't speak to
4 each other. So it's impossible to generalize from that.
5 But the loss at a preverbal period creates a lot of
6 different emotions.

7 I'll give you a non-adoptive example. One of my
8 clients was three years old riding on the back of her bike
9 with her father and he died of a heart attack. She felt
10 it's her fault and she's 50 and she still thinks it's my
11 fault. And that's shame. That's not guilt.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay. Sure.

13 MR. HAFETZ: It's a different process. It's very
14 serious.

15 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Right.

16 MR. HAFETZ: Sometimes it's subtle; sometimes
17 it's not there, or it's varying degrees in intensity.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Great.

19 MR. HAFETZ: Yes.

20 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Well, thank you. Thank
21 you very much.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you.

24 Representative Tallman?

25 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 And I've got two questions. And Chairman Benninghoff, his
2 piece of legislation is addressing a very poignant issue.
3 And so my first question is going to be to the professor
4 and Dr. Wiley. On cognitive emotional disconnect---

5 MR. HAFETZ: Yes.

6 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: ---I'm very familiar
7 with the foster system here in Pennsylvania. My church is
8 kind of big into that. We have a thing called RAD, which
9 is relational associative disorder. Do you say that this
10 cognitive emotional disconnect is the same as?

11 MR. HAFETZ: Just for the record, I have a
12 master's degree. I'm immensely flattered to be addressed
13 as professor. I mean, believe me, it's a wonderful
14 feeling. I come from a family of professors but I never
15 felt good enough that I would ever make it because I was
16 adopted. So I am validated now beyond -- you have healed
17 me beyond comprehension.

18 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Is that right?

19 MR. HAFETZ: RAD, you mean reactive attachment
20 disorder?

21 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Yes.

22 MR. HAFETZ: Okay. I call it compromised
23 attachment because reactive attachment disorder puts us in
24 the area of pathology and we're saying an adoptee is now
25 mentally ill. That is a very extreme form of behavior.

1 The diagnosis RAD in the DSM-IV is really a poor diagnosis
2 because the research is way ahead of it. It's very
3 ambiguous.

4 One of the reasons we diagnose is to get
5 insurance companies to pay claims, not because that's
6 what's really wrong with the child. And by diagnosing the
7 child with attachment disorder, we are negating the
8 inability of the adoptive family, maybe they don't know how
9 to attach to this child and the fault is in the family
10 system. We are actually scapegoating the child.

11 So I'm very dubious of RAD diagnosis, fetal
12 alcohol syndrome unless the symptoms are profound. I don't
13 think children should be diagnosed anyway before the age of
14 15 because they carry that label with them. And once they
15 think there's something wrong with them, they can play into
16 that. So I treat it with suspicion when I do see that
17 diagnosis and rule it in or out. I think it's the rare
18 cases that would fall into that category.

19 We are attachment-compromised because the first
20 attachment in our lives resulted in us being abandoned, so
21 we expect that in future attachments. We anticipate that.
22 And I've seen this and adoptees in intimate relationships
23 in their 40s and 50s.

24 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Interesting. I would
25 just make a comment. Our Children and Youth folks, it's a

1 spectrum of RAD. It's not just one. It's a broad
2 spectrum.

3 MR. HAFETZ: Yes.

4 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: And secondly, by the
5 way, I found your testimony very, very interesting
6 because---

7 MR. HAFETZ: Thank you.

8 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: ---I would not have
9 known at birth or one or two days I would've had some of
10 these issues. So I'm just going to ask this question. So
11 if I'm premature, seven months, are those same issues
12 there? If I'm seven months and I'm adopted at birth, do I
13 have the same issues?

14 MR. HAFETZ: This is just my opinion that the
15 process that I'm talking about, that exists to a greater or
16 lesser extent like a normal distribution. For most of us
17 it's right in the middle. For the outliers it's hardly at
18 all. For others it's extreme. To a greater and lesser
19 extent there's this process. So, yes, I think it's there
20 in all of us that are separated, but it may be significant.
21 It may be insignificant.

22 What's important is that the overwhelming number
23 of us do adapt and live happy, healthy lives. That doesn't
24 mean we still don't have something to resolve or feelings
25 of memory. I think it's a process. And if you search for

1 it and I usually do -- in my clients you can usually
2 uncover that this disconnection is at work at some point
3 and you can address it. But in no way do I view this in
4 the context of pathology. So someone who's trained in a
5 medical context looks at everything in the context of
6 pathology and disorder. I'm trained in positive psychology
7 so I look at strengths and what can I do to strengthen this
8 child, not alleviate the symptoms. It's my view.

9 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you. Now, I'm
10 going to ask Carolyn a question.

11 MR. HAFETZ: Okay.

12 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Just real quick, I'm
13 going to ask you as a parent who gave up. By the way,
14 we've had a general decline in abortion so I'm just
15 wondering, the three of you said that, did we filter out
16 that national trend with the data that's here? That's not
17 my question. My question is you as a mother gave up a
18 child and that had to be emotionally trying at that point
19 of time.

20 And then we see on TV, and I'm trying to think,
21 but where people have some kind of program, you know,
22 whatever, Donahue or whatever's out there now, the child
23 will -- and they're typically older, you know, 20s or 30s,
24 will meet their birth mother and it's usually a very
25 positive, joyous reunion. And that's typical, but we have

1 seen at least two times where that wasn't. That did not
2 occur. So I guess my question is what about that
3 situation? And I'm asking you as a mother. What do you
4 think is going on there? I'm not sure myself.

5 MS. HOARD: Well, I think both parties have to be
6 ready. For instance, with my son, when I first contacted
7 Catholic Charities because I wanted to see if they could
8 give me some information, they told me that he had been in
9 touch with the agency a few years earlier and he had tried
10 to find me but that there was no information available to
11 him. So then they gave me some information and with the
12 help of a private investigator I was able to contact him.
13 At that point in his life, he did not want to have any
14 contact with me, and so I had to respect that, that he
15 wasn't at that point where it would have been good to have
16 a reunion with me. And I didn't know that he had been
17 seeking a reunion three or four years earlier than that.
18 So I think each party has to respect the other party and
19 what they're ready for at that particular time in their
20 lives.

21 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you.

22 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Representative Miller.

23 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 I apologize for not, perhaps, knowing the exact
25 protocol. I was wondering, though, if the good Chairman

1 Benninghoff would take a question of clarity.

2 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: If that's the will
3 of the Committee, I have no problem. That'd be fine.

4 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: You agree to stand for
5 interrogation?

6 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: As tall as I can
7 stand.

8 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: The gentleman is in
9 order.

10 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Mr. Chairman, part of my research coming in
12 before, and I took a look through some related adoption
13 resources in the State, and then when I heard the testimony
14 today, I seemed to pick up two different strains here. And
15 perhaps you might be able to assist me. I thought that I
16 was hearing from two of our presenters today that they were
17 talking specifically about allowing for the original birth
18 certificate upon the age of majority, I think was one
19 testimony, or as an adult was a word another testifier
20 used. And then I seemed to hear a third testifier seem to
21 be saying at any time, meaning under the age of majority.
22 And when I looked at the language presented here, I wasn't
23 sure if I was understanding your intent of what you were
24 looking to do in relation to that question of age of
25 majority or not.

1 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Great question. I
2 appreciate the opportunity for clarification. Basically,
3 we're adding Section D to the current law back in 1953,
4 which at that time requires that this be done at the age of
5 18 years or older, and we would continue that practice here
6 in the State of Pennsylvania as an adult.

7 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you for the
8 clarification on that.

9 I wondered one final question, Mr. Chairman, if
10 you would, I know that you made reference to the voluntary
11 sharing of medical information. I wonder, sir, given your
12 experience and your involvement with the issue, is there
13 any step along the way to perhaps go through a path that
14 would take away the voluntariness of that aspect? It would
15 seem that the medical information should be something or
16 some may look for it to be something that would accompany
17 every child.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Someone might think
19 that I put you up to that question. It's ironic that you
20 ask that but when I first came to the legislature back in
21 1997, that was an issue of great interest to me. The State
22 of Pennsylvania had actually just upgraded some of their
23 laws in '95 to include some of that voluntary information.
24 And the reality is is there was a lot of pride of
25 authorship of the gentleman who did that in the previous

1 session and so I kind of acquiesced to not come in and try
2 to change a Bill he just did.

3 There was a lot of fear for some people to do
4 that. No one necessarily likes mandating but I think our
5 society has grown and progressed in a lot of ways and I
6 think we've seen the significance and the importance of
7 trying to provide additional information. What I would
8 answer your question directly and say is I think that is
9 another great goal that we should work towards. I would
10 like to not necessarily do it within 162.

11 I think the people who would like to have access
12 to their original birth certificate have waited too long
13 and I would like to do that, but I would be more than glad
14 to work with you in conjunction with that because I think
15 there's objective ways that we can do that still protecting
16 people's privacies.

17 But I'm a big believer, especially as a former
18 healthcare worker, that if you can provide two, three
19 generations of information to people about their medical
20 history, you can do that without necessarily identifying
21 names and things as we discharge children from a hospital
22 with that parent or as an adoptee. Here, in addition to
23 this, you know, your maternal mother had this issue, your
24 grandfather had this. And again, as somebody with five
25 children, three of which has had medical problems, that

1 information would have been tremendously helpful.

2 And I will close with I have always felt in some
3 ways inept as their father because I can't provide that
4 information to them, that somehow I have shortchanged them.
5 And I've always had emotional turmoil within myself when
6 physicians are asking these questions that I can't answer.
7 I'm the reason why I can't answer that. But as some of the
8 great testifiers said, that's not necessarily by my choice.

9 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: I thank the kind Chairman
10 for the answers. I would just note that if the Chairman
11 finds the time to take the lead on that issue, I'm sure
12 that we'll find many good sponsors looking to jump on in
13 the sense that I would think that we have to perhaps find
14 -- there are many children right now who are just starting
15 that process and maybe we should address that sooner rather
16 than later. But thank you very much for the time.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Thank you for your
18 input and your support.

19 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Representative
20 Brownlee.

21 MINORITY VICE CHAIRWOMAN BROWNLEE: I thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman.

23 I've been listening to the testimony and there's
24 some very compelling testimony. And I fully expect to
25 support this bill because I think that everyone wants to

1 know who they are and where they come from.

2 But I have a question and I'm hoping that
3 somebody on the panel or possibly Chairman Benninghoff
4 could answer because around here there's always two sides
5 to the coin, okay. And what I'm going to ask is can anyone
6 here tell me what the argument would be against this Bill?

7 MS. HOARD: Well, I can tell you from other
8 States that the primary argument is going to be that birth
9 mothers were promised confidentiality. And I can also tell
10 you as someone who has her papers that I signed at the time
11 of relinquishment and we also have papers that two other
12 birth mothers signed at the time of relinquishment, there
13 is nothing in those papers that promises confidentiality.
14 But the argument will be that there was an implied promise
15 of confidentiality, but an implied promise is not a written
16 promise of confidentiality. So that is one of the primary
17 arguments that we will get.

18 MR. HAFETZ: I want to read an excerpt from the
19 Oregon Court of Appeals. After Oregon unsealed its
20 records, they were sued, and the issue was exactly the one
21 that you brought up. And this has gone to the Supreme
22 Court and Sandra Day O'Connor refused to hear an appeal on
23 it. "Neither a birth nor an adoption may be carried out in
24 the absolute cloak of secrecy that may surround a
25 contraception or the early termination of a pregnancy. A

1 birth is an event that requires the generation of an
2 accurate vital record that preserves certain data,
3 including the name of the birth mother. That the State has
4 a legitimate interest in preserving such data is not
5 disputed. We recognize that a birth mother may well have a
6 legitimate interest in keeping secret the circumstances of
7 a birth that is followed by an adoption and also that an
8 adoptee may have a legitimate interest in discovering the
9 identity of his or her birth mother.

10 Legitimate interests, however, do not necessarily
11 equate with fundamental rights. The State may make policy
12 choices to accommodate such competing interests just as the
13 State has done with the passage of Measure 58," the Oregon
14 passage. "We conclude that the State legitimately may
15 choose to disseminate such data to the child whose birth is
16 recorded on such a birth certificate without infringing on
17 any fundamental right to privacy of the birth mother who
18 does not desire contact with the child." That is actually
19 the law of the land.

20 MINORITY VICE CHAIRWOMAN BROWNLEE: Thank you.

21 MR. HAFETZ: You're welcome.

22 MINORITY VICE CHAIRWOMAN BROWNLEE: Is that in
23 your testimony anywhere?

24 MR. HAFETZ: It's not but I'd be happy to give
25 you the document.

1 MINORITY VICE CHAIRWOMAN BROWNLEE: Mr. Chairman,
2 would you see that we are able to get that information?

3 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Sure. If you could
4 provide that to us at the end of the hearing, we'll make
5 sure that that's distributed to the Members.

6 MR. HAFETZ: Okay.

7 MINORITY VICE CHAIRWOMAN BROWNLEE: Thank you.
8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: All right. Well, I'm
10 pleased to report that we are running right on schedule, so
11 I'd like to thank our testifiers again very much for coming
12 today and taking the time to come all the way up to the
13 State capital. I think your testimony was very valuable.
14 Thank you.

15 MS. TRANSUE-WOOLSTON: Thank you.

16 MR. HAFETZ: Thank you.

17 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: With that, our next
18 testifier has come quite a ways to speak with us here
19 today. We'll now hear from State Representative Ann
20 Williams from Illinois. Representative Williams is an
21 adoptee from Pennsylvania. She currently represents the
22 11th District in the Illinois State House representing
23 Chicago's North Side, and she is a member of the Adoption
24 Reform Committee there.

25 So, Representative Williams, a hearty welcome to

1 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania---

2 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you.

3 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: ---and we look forward
4 to your testimony.

5 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you. Thank
6 you so much, Chairman Lawrence and Chairwoman Bishop. It's
7 such an honor to be here today and I really appreciate the
8 opportunity to testify and I'm enjoying being in your
9 beautiful Capitol building.

10 As you already mentioned, I represent the 11th
11 District, which is the North Side of Chicago, and, as you
12 also mentioned, I'm also a Pennsylvania adoptee, so I'm
13 here to strongly urge your support of House Bill 162. And
14 although my family moved away from the Commonwealth in the
15 '70s, I have been a very closely monitoring this issue for
16 many, many years.

17 And I want to thank Chairmen Benninghoff for your
18 commitment to advancing this legislation and also to thank
19 the many advocates who have been pushing this over the
20 years. I have been watching from Illinois and appreciate
21 all your hard work.

22 Illinois passed a similar bill in 2010 before I
23 was elected so I didn't have the opportunity to vote on it,
24 although I did testify on behalf of it. But it did pass,
25 and so now in Illinois adult adoptees have the opportunity

1 to obtain their original birth certificates. The Illinois
2 law, which went into effect in 2011, has been tremendously
3 successful, and whoever mentioned 8,000 adoptees got their
4 records, it's now up to 9,000 have obtained their original
5 birth certificates.

6 And, gosh, the Bill's signing was an incredible
7 day. It was great to see the excitement, joy, and
8 fulfillment of these people who were able to get their
9 birth certificates for the first time. But I have to be
10 honest, it was a bit bittersweet for me because I was not
11 among them.

12 In 1968 I was adopted into a wonderful and loving
13 family from the Catholic Social Agency in Allentown. Like
14 all of us -- and I brought props -- I have a birth
15 certificate to reflect my entry into the world. The
16 difference between me and some of you is that my birth
17 certificate, it's not real. It's called a birth
18 certificate but it's actually an adoption certificate. I
19 don't know and have never seen my original birth
20 certificate. I don't know who gave birth to me. I don't
21 know where I was born. This is pretty significant
22 information and information that most of us take for
23 granted.

24 Pennsylvania law does permit an adoption agency
25 to give out what they call non-identifying information on

1 his or her birth parents and the circumstances of his or
2 her adoption placement. I requested and obtained mine
3 maybe 1998, so a while ago now. The result was this two-
4 page document, which contains information that was
5 summarized by a caseworker about me, my birth parents or at
6 least what they thought was true, and I've read every
7 single word of it over and over because that's all I have.
8 But it's not enough.

9 House Bill 162 would give me and other adult
10 adoptees the opportunity to get our original birth
11 certificates, which is actually the opportunity to get the
12 truth. Having access to my original birth certificate is
13 important for so many reasons. And Chairmen Benninghoff
14 mentioned one of them, and that is first having the
15 opportunity to possibly get medical history information.
16 So many of us take this for granted, but especially as you
17 get a little bit older, the doctors are requesting this
18 more and more frequently. And my answer, too, to these
19 medical questions about family history of cancer, diabetes,
20 et cetera, was always N/A, N/A, documents and pages and
21 pages of N/A, which I might now change to I can't get this
22 information because Pennsylvania won't release my original
23 birth certificate.

24 But in addition to the medical information, it
25 would give a sense of my ethnic background. So many of us

1 really get a lot of our identity from what ethnic
2 background we have. This two-page document lists a few
3 possible ethnicities for me. I'm going with the Italian
4 because that seems fun and, you know, they can cook and
5 everything. But I'm just not sure about the accuracy, and
6 that would be an important and exciting piece of the puzzle
7 to put together.

8 Finally, and I think most significantly, having
9 that original birth certificate would fulfill a very basic
10 and intangible need to know, as one of the Members said,
11 who you are and where you came from. It's such an inherent
12 part of most of us that we don't even think about it, but
13 for most adoptees, it's one big question mark. I strongly
14 believe that having access to your original birth
15 certificate is a basic human right and really a civil right
16 because don't we all want to know the beginning of our
17 stories?

18 I strongly believe in adoption. It has given me
19 the most wonderful family I could ever ask for. They're
20 probably watching online and they wish they could be here
21 today. My parents are the ones who raised me, took care of
22 me when I was sick, carted me around to concerts, school
23 plays, followed me around in band, you know, watching
24 through all of the ups and downs of life. They were my
25 best precinct workers, they were huge contributors to my

1 campaign, and you know all about that, and they wouldn't
2 miss an Inauguration Day. So nothing about finding out or
3 getting this information would change that at all. They're
4 my mom and dad and they always will be. My quest to find
5 my identity and any other adoptee's quest to find their
6 identity does in no way jeopardize their family. My
7 parents understand this and that's why they're very
8 supportive and excited about this Bill.

9 I turned 45 years old in April so my adoption
10 took place 45 years ago. The world looks a lot different
11 now than it did then. There were no iPads, iPods,
12 Facebook, Twitter, computers, anything like that, but my
13 birth mother, then a 20-year-old woman, is now 65 years
14 old. If she is still alive and we meet someday, she and I
15 are going to just have to figure out what kind of
16 relationship we will or will not have. It really should be
17 up to us. We're talking about a relationship with two
18 people that government really should have no place in
19 regulating.

20 It's now 2013 and I strongly believe it's time
21 for the Commonwealth to join the growing number of States
22 to recognize the very basic human right and need to know
23 who they are and where they come from.

24 Thank you so much.

25 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you,

1 Representative Williams, and again thank you for taking the
2 time to come to Harrisburg today.

3 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you so much.

4 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: I wanted to ask a quick
5 question. In your testimony here, and I will confess that
6 I was ignorant of this, that you say that the law here
7 allows for you to request basic non-identifying
8 information. And I mean non-identifying information, that
9 sounds like an extremely vague term, which sometimes we are
10 very guilty of as lawmakers. But I was wondering if maybe
11 you could give a little bit more information about what --
12 I mean, it's a two-page letter, so what kind of information
13 would be contained in such a letter?

14 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Well, I can't attest
15 to the accuracy of any of it because if you think about it,
16 this information was provided verbally by a 20-year-old
17 woman, which it says, well, I think, was the age of my
18 birth mother when she relinquished me under quite a bit of
19 duress. So it's what she reported as summarized decades
20 and decades later by a caseworker digging through files.

21 So it contains a little bit of information, her
22 age, her ethnic background, her height, her weight, a
23 little bit about her family, birth father apparently,
24 according to this document, never knew the mother was
25 pregnant, which is interesting. You know, you hang on to

1 every word because you have nothing else, and it talks a
2 little bit about the circumstances. She was, as many, many
3 women were in the '50s and '60s, went off to typing school
4 or something of the like but really it was a maternity home
5 where she was cared for until she gave the baby, me, up for
6 adoption. So it has some general stuff.

7 I mean, as someone that has no information about
8 their family history, it's a very significant document. I
9 look at my mom and dad and we don't look alike, although
10 people say we act alike at times, I mean, nature versus
11 nurture, but it's kind of intriguing to read this. And I
12 just really wish I could find out a little more detail and
13 dig deeper. I mean, you get to the end and you're like,
14 well, then what happened? And there are so many more
15 questions.

16 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you.

17 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you.

18 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Chairman Benninghoff.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Now you're under the
20 gun. Actually, I was going to ask if you could share what
21 knowledge you may have as far as Illinois' experience
22 because I think, especially listening to some of the
23 testifiers today, I think Mrs. Hoard's testimony is
24 interesting because she is a birth mother who gave up a
25 child who also had the desire to learn about that child.

1 What I would like to get across not only to the
2 Members but also to those who might be watching is I think
3 sometimes we, as a society, assume all birth mothers, i.e.,
4 or a parent, would never, ever want this information to go
5 to the child. They don't want to have this exposure. And
6 I suspect that that's not true and I suspect not everyone's
7 going to have a reunion on TV with their birth child. And
8 for many adoptees, it's just about having that certificate.
9 But I think it's wrong of us to assume that all birth
10 parents, either both or one, would also maybe not want to
11 know that that child is healthy and that child is well and
12 that they're doing well. And that should not be an
13 obstacle to not let this Bill pass.

14 And I don't know what experiences you may have
15 seen or heard about now in Illinois, if you could share a
16 few of those kinds of results.

17 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Well, you make an
18 excellent point, and the coalition working in support of
19 the Bill in Illinois contained adoptees like myself. Many,
20 many birth mothers were involved, too. So I think they
21 call it the adoption triad. All segments of the world of
22 adoption have an interest in moving these sorts of Bills
23 forward.

24 And just anecdotally, the stories that I've heard
25 have been overwhelmingly positive. I mean I think

1 Ms. Hoard can testify. You don't just forget. You don't
2 give up a baby for adoption and you're not just done with
3 it then.

4 And I think that for me, and I've said this many
5 times, if I were and hopefully when I get the opportunity
6 to meet my birth mother, the first thing I'd like to say is
7 thank you for giving me such a great opportunity, such a
8 wonderful family, and I think there's some healing that
9 would take place on both sides of that were to happen.

10 So overwhelmingly, and I think the stats show it
11 in Illinois as well, it's been a very positive experience.
12 I've heard very, very little -- actually, I've heard no
13 negative outcomes.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: A last quick comment
15 on it, you talked about the triad there. I'm assuming also
16 specifically in your case and others, we're all very
17 blessed to have this other set of parents who say I want
18 you, I love you, I want to take care of you. And a lot of
19 them are, I think, becoming more supportive of saying yes,
20 I think that is your right. You should be able to pursue
21 that. Again, think society assumes that adoptive parents
22 want everything blackened out and closed off and don't give
23 any of this information. I don't think that's the case.

24 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Absolutely. In
25 fact, I was just talking with a colleague of a friend of

1 mine who was here yesterday who has adopted a child and
2 everyone -- in current society you adopt a child and it
3 looks very, very different. The adoptive parents today
4 understand the psychology behind adoption and they make an
5 effort to share identifying information, ethnic background,
6 and in some cases adoptions are more open than others and
7 there's actual exchange of pictures and sometimes meetings
8 that take place.

9 That notwithstanding, I think that the
10 recognition that to know who you are and where you come
11 from is just an important part of a healthy psychology is
12 it is recognized for kids today that are adopted. And
13 there's a group of us that were adopted and the records
14 were sealed that don't get that shot, so I think that we
15 feel kind of like the lost generations and we'd like to
16 close that gap.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Thank you,
18 Representative Williams.

19 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you.

20 REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you. Chairwoman
23 Bishop.

24 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: I'm just going to
25 ask one last short one.

1 Representative Williams, welcome.

2 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you.

3 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: How old were you
4 when you learned that you were adopted?

5 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Oh, when I found out
6 I was adopted?

7 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Yes.

8 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: I don't know. I
9 feel like I've always known. My parents were, I think,
10 looking back very, very good. It's just something I've
11 always known. They never announced it one day that I can
12 recall. I just grew up identifying as an adopted person.
13 My brother is also adopted, not biologically related to me,
14 and we were always aware of that and it just became part of
15 us. And so it was never an issue. And I think my
16 nonprofessional opinion that was the way to go because I
17 had a very positive view about it and I felt very wanted
18 and cared for by my parents, still do.

19 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Did you at the time
20 when you found out you were adopted, were you angry? Did
21 it make you feel someone had deceived you?

22 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: No, I don't recall
23 finding out per se but it's interesting because I spoke
24 with a reporter a couple days ago about this Bill and he
25 asked that question. He said, do you now have any

1 resentment in any way? And for the biological mothers out
2 there, absolutely not. I don't even have a bit of that. I
3 have appreciation and I'm very grateful that I have the
4 life that I do. I am concerned on how she is doing and
5 hope that she knows that I'm well and I'd like the
6 opportunity to tell her that. But, no, not at all.

7 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Thank you so much.

8 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you.

9 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: All right. Well, thank
10 you, Representative Williams again---

11 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you so much.

12 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: ---for your long
13 trip---

14 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you as well.

15 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: ---and for your
16 compelling testimony.

17 IL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Thank you.

18 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: It's appreciated.

19 Well, with that, this brings the hearing to a
20 close.

21 I'd just like to make a brief comment that very
22 dear friends of ours at our church have adopted two
23 children in the last several years, and I confess that in
24 general on the topic of adoption I was relatively ignorant
25 prior to that. You know, certainly, you see it on

1 television or you read about it in the newspaper or you see
2 a movie where somebody's adopted or whatever. It seems
3 like every 1980s sitcom growing up there had to be an
4 episode where somebody found out they were adopted and then
5 the process went through, right. But a lot of that I think
6 boiled down to stereotypes. And certainly the personal
7 experience that I've had now with these close friends of
8 ours has been very eye-opening and just a very positive
9 experience really for everyone involved.

10 So I'd like to thank everyone who took the time
11 to testify today on this legislation, and I'd like to
12 recognize Chairwoman Bishop for closing remarks as well.

13 MINORITY CHAIRWOMAN BISHOP: Thank you very much.
14 I would like to just say a couple of things.

15 We have come a long way with adoption. This Bill
16 has been around for a while. I'm delighted that it has
17 made it to a hearing with the Committee. And for those who
18 ask questions and it may not say everything that we would
19 like it to say, it's a step in the right direction. And we
20 have to begin somewhere. We need the door open so that
21 perhaps if there are other things that we can address, it
22 will be easier then.

23 I certainly hope that as it narrows down to a
24 vote that we will all remember some of the things that
25 we've heard today, some of the advantages, and those at a

1 disadvantage will take them and put them in another Bill at
2 another time and vote them into the House where they could
3 be changed. But I do believe that it is the best that we
4 can offer at this time, and I certainly thank the
5 Representative for taking the effort and for being patient
6 because he's worked on this for a little while, and I hope
7 that all is well. Thank you.

8 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Very good. That
9 concludes the hearing. Thank you.

10

11 (The hearing concluded at 11:40 a.m.)

1 I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings
2 are a true and accurate transcription produced from audio
3 on the said proceedings and that this is a correct
4 transcript of the same.

5
6
7 Christy Snyder

8 Transcriptionist

9 Diaz Data Services, LLC