

The Honorable Katharine M. Watson
Chair, Committee on Children & Youth
41A East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2144

RE: HB 162 – Adoptee Access to Birth Certificate

Dear Representative Watson:

I am the mother of an adopted person born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and relinquished for adoption. I am writing in support of HB 162.

I gave birth to my only child in July 1966. My son was adopted three days after, I was told. Lifelong anonymity or confidentiality was not promised to me. I was told to forget and to return home and to 'honor' my parents and keep the secret forever, for the sake of my son. I lived and gave birth at St Vincents Home for unwed mothers, run by Catholic Charities. After I relinquished my son, I went back to graduate school and slowly attempted to remake myself. I would have welcomed any information about him, any contact, any communication. It was out of the question....for the sake of the child. Ultimately a new found passion in secondary science education took me to a far away land and in 1970, I 'adopted' the children of Hawaii. For 40 years they have been the principal recipient of all my energy and enthusiasm. Shame and fear over relinquishing my son have been mountains in my life. Worry about his health, his happiness have weighed heavy on my heart. Happily, it has been my students who allowed me to mask both shame and fear and to build my own bridges so that I could be productive, creative and maybe even significant in their lives. In 1989 and 1996 I contacted Catholic Charities in Philadelphia with the intention of finding my son or at least to leave my information so that he could find me if he wished. This did not happen.

I am now in reunion with my son. It has been five incredible years. He has special relationships with his birth father and a half brother and half sister as well. He also tried to made connections earlier in his adult life but was unsuccessful. He was denied the right to his original birth certificate. Adoption laws that do not allow adoptees the right to know their genetic and cultural identity are not fair and not compassionate. It is about the child, the adopted person. It is about 'my son.' It is about all adopted 'sons and daughters.' Instead the law implies that he must be protected from who? From me? Or is the implication that birth moms need protection.....from what? From love? From the opportunity to know their children? These laws need to be reassessed with 21st century eyes. You have that opportunity now by passing HB 162 which will allow adult adoptees the right to their original birth certificate. And more ...the right to pursue their genetic and cultural identity.

My son's first parents are now in his life, as are his genetic sibs and aunties and uncles and cousins-all in addition to the family who provided the foundation for his values and his accomplishments, his adoptive family. His identity is now complete...and the energy that he has had to put into making sense of a life that was not really the full story is now reversed. That energy can now go into perfecting his already sensitive self and talents as a citizen in his community and isnt this the energy that we 'the people' need and want to encourage.....for the SAKE OF OUR CHILDREN.

Most respectfully submitted,
Jacquelyn Wesolosky,
Kaneohe, Hawaii