

Written Testimony of Priscilla Stone Sharp
To the Honorable Chairman and Members of the
House Children & Youth Committee
Regarding HB162 – Adoptee Rights Bill

Chairman and Esteemed Members ~~

Thank you to Rep. Benninghoff and all the co-sponsors for supporting HB162. This is such an important piece of legislation that is way overdue for passage. Especially in this age of information technology and the generally-accepted acknowledgement of the importance of knowing one's family history, heritage and the identity of those to whom one is blood related, to force adopted persons - and only adopted persons - to live in the dark ages of secrets and lies is cruel and ludicrous.

I cannot imagine looking at myself in the mirror and respecting what I see if I were one of those legislators who could look at someone in the eye and say, "Genealogy is a wonderful thing - to know your ancestors, your family history and heritage, but not for you. You adopted people don't need to concern yourselves with that." Or, "The Surgeon General has stressed the importance of knowing our family health history. But, not you adoptees. Your adopted family health history is good enough, or you can just continue to put 'unknown' on medical records forms."

As a volunteer search angel, I have found and reunited close to 500 families over the past five years. The overwhelming majority of the mothers and many of the fathers were overjoyed to be found and looked forward to a continuing relationship with their lost son or daughter; but, even if reunion is not possible, at a minimum adopted people deserve the right enjoyed by every other citizen of saying "I know" instead of "I wonder."

Fortunately, today we have the exciting, burgeoning field of DNA family matching where we are daily making discoveries of family connections and origin. This is positive scientific proof that, with or without government sanction, families who long to know each other will not be kept apart. Truly, what man has torn asunder, God (through science) will reunite. It's time for outmoded, inequitable laws of the past to be cast off and the people to be freed from the oppression of secrets and lies.

Finally, we have the examples and experiences of several other states that have restored dignity, justice and respect to people whose records were sealed because of adoption - OR, AL, ME, NH, RI, IL, among them - where tens of thousands of adoptees have received their original birth certificates. I hope and pray Pennsylvania Legislators will step up and do the right thing.

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