

Adoptee Rights Bill (HB 162)

July 17, 2013

Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston

Testimony in support of House Bill 162: the Adoptee Rights Bill

Dear Chairwoman Watson, Chairwoman Bishop, and esteemed members of the Children and Youth Committee,

My name is Amanda Transue-Woolston. I am a social worker and author and speaker on adoption issues. I work with adoptees and their families individually and in groups. I have also spent several years working on adoption at a broader level in national and international policy. The purpose of my testimony today is to express support for House Bill 162. HB 162 will restore the right of adult adoptees who were born in Pennsylvania to access their original birth certificate the same way that all other citizens enjoy.

I was born in a state that allows greater access to original birth certificates than Pennsylvania. Even so, the way in which I accessed my original birth certificate was full of barriers that are not faced by those who are not adopted. When I requested my original birth certificate, I was shocked by the barriers I faced. It was the first time in my life that I felt embarrassed and ashamed of being adopted. No adoption law should ever make an adoptee feel this way.

Likewise, Pennsylvania does not acknowledge the equality of adoptees—harboring barriers of its own to original birth certificates. I know that we can change this. With the passing of Act 101 of 2010, Pennsylvania took a bold step forward in becoming one of fewer than 50% of states to legally recognize open adoptions. We did this because we know that openness is a best practice in adoption. I ask that we make our laws consistent in this regard and honor that openness is a best practice for adults from adoptions in past decades as well.

I have placed a great deal of focus on narratives and adoption issues in my writing and speaking. Yet today I have purposely left my written and verbal testimony clear and simple because this bill and the issue it addresses are clear and simple. If we believe that adoption should be in the best interest of those who are adopted, we will make sure our adoption laws affirm this. Adoptees should not feel ashamed for being adopted. It is imperative that the law that governs adoptee access to original birth certificates be changed to reflect their equality and resiliency.

I am thankful for the opportunity to present testimony and for the voices of adult adoptees in Pennsylvania to be heard.

I urge you to support HB 162 and recommend it to the House for a vote.

Sincerely,

Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston, BSW



PENNSYLVANIA ADOPTEE RIGHTS

EMPOWERING ADULT ADOPTES AND THEIR FAMILIES SINCE 2009

HB 162: EQUALITY FOR ADULT ADOPTES

Let Pennsylvania lead once again.

Up until 1984, Pennsylvania was among three states that allowed adult adoptees equal access to their original birth certificates. While a total of six states have now given equal access to original birth certificates, Pennsylvania law lags far behind with its unfair system.

Current Pennsylvania law requires adult adoptees born in Pennsylvania to petition the court system or utilize a registry to access a "summary" of their original birth certificate.

No other adult citizen born in Pennsylvania is required to...

- Ask a parent's permission to see their birth record.
- Receive only a "summary" of their birth record.
- Petition the courts, use a registry, or pay excessive fees to see their birth record.

This is inequality.

HB 162 is about equality. The reasons to support the immediate passage of HB 162 are clear and compelling.

Treating adult adoptees equally....

- Sends a positive message about what it means to be adopted.
- Honors the dignity and worth of adult adoptees as people.
- Reduces the burden on the court and registry systems.
- Reflects excellent policy and best practices regarding this issue.
- Allows adoptees to easily resolve issues they may have obtaining passports, driver's licenses, job security clearance, or accessing American Indian tribal membership.

Support HB 162 today. Support equality for adult adoptees.

Get Informed

For a full list of FAQs, research, & statistics, please Visit www.adopteerightspa.org. Or, simply capture our QR code with your smartphone.



WHAT IS HB 162?

HB 162 gives adult adoptees born in Pennsylvania the same access to their original birth certificates that all other citizens enjoy.

WHAT IS THE COST?

There is no known fiscal impact to this legislation. In fact, it should increase efficiency as fewer adult adoptees will tie up the court and registry systems to obtain their original birth certificate.

"NOT TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN IS TO BE CONDEMNED TO LIVE FOREVER AS A CHILD."

-CICERO