

ADOPTEE RIGHTS COALITION



19 February 2020

Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Senator William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB1039/SB0743

Dear Chairman Clippinger, Chairman Smith, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for allowing the **Adoptee Rights Coalition** to submit this testimony in support of **House Bill 1039 and Senate Bill 0743**, which will restore the right of **all** adopted persons born in Maryland, and their descendants, to obtain copies of their original birth certificates by extending that right to Maryland adoptees adopted before the January 1, 2000 cutoff and to eliminate counter-productive disclosure vetoes.

The **Adoptee Rights Coalition** is a nonprofit adoptee-led group advocating for restored access to original birth records for all US born adoptees. We educate and advocate through social media and through written testimony. Since 2008, we have been a presence at the National Conference of State Legislatures where our members engage with legislators and other interested parties regarding legislation affecting access to original birth records for US adoptees.

HB1039/SB0743, An Act Concerning Adoption - Access to Birth and Adoption Records and Search, Contact, and Reunion Services, would restore the right of **every** adopted adult in Maryland to obtain a copy of his or her original birth certificate. Passing this bill would fully achieve the restoration of access that began in 2000, and which has proven to be the appropriate path in and other states.

A number of states have recently changed their adoption records access laws in recognition of the fact that sealed records are no longer an insurmountable barrier to identifying biological family. Between DNA testing, social media, and other widely available resources, most adoptees will be able to learn the identities of **both** parents if they so desire. For most adoptees, obtaining their original birth certificates will be about equality, not search and reunion.

Restoring access to the original birth certificate for Maryland adoptees will allow them to contact the biological parent directly in a discreet and sensitive manner rather than involving members of the parent's extended family through DNA matching. In addition, **HB1039/SB0743** eliminate counter-productive disclosure vetoes and provides for private communications between a birth parent and an adoptee - via a contact preference form.

Please approve **House Bill 1039** and **Senate Bill 0743** to restore access to original birth certificates for Maryland's adult adoptees who were adopted before January 1, 2000, and eliminate counter-productive disclosure vetoes, thereby completing the restoration process that Maryland started twenty years ago.

Respectfully submitted,

Adoptee Rights Coalition

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