

February 17, 2020

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

RE: HB1039/SB0743

Dear Chairman Smith, and Members of the Committee:

I was born in Washington, DC in 1961, adopted at three days old in Prince George's County Maryland and have since lived my whole life in the State of Maryland.

I strongly believe access to a person's original birth certificate is a civil right. Once a person reaches the age of 18, this fundamental and precious document should be provided to the person to which it belongs or the birth family. It is simply a matter of human dignity. After all, it is MY birth record. My birth record remains under seal for 100 years in the District of Columbia. It has been a humiliating experience to only possess my redacted and revised version of my birth certificate when every other citizen has full access to their birth records. I strongly support equality for every single human to be able to have a copy of their birth record.

I discovered I was adopted when I was ten years old. I have spent the last 50 years pursuing every available avenue to obtain a copy of my original birth certificate to no avail. In 2018, I took a DNA test and within two days of my results I was in contact with my birth family. I immediately found two sisters and a brother, all living in Maryland less than half hour from me my whole life. Sadly, my birth parents had both passed away in 2015.

Upon meeting my birth family within a week of my results, they told me my birth mother and the entire family had been looking for me for years. In fact, it was a second cousin in another state who first contacted me via DNA. Even she and her extended family knew about me. Meeting them was a joyful occasion, but also quite bittersweet to learn that my whole birth family knew all the details of my birth, they prayed for me my whole life, celebrated my birthdays, remembered me at holidays and were dismayed

that there was no way to find me. They were especially sad that my birth mother and father never got to meet me after searching for me all these years. My sisters and brother remain quite incredulous that I still do not have a copy of my original birth certificate. Even they would like to see it and hold it.

I respectfully ask that you vote YES on SB0743. Please grant me the dignity and equal rights to my birth certificate before I die. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

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