

Suzanne Bachner

February 19, 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: HB1039/SB0743

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

I am an adoptee who was born, raised and adopted in New York City. I am passionate about Adoptee Rights and restoring adult adoptees' unrestricted access to our original birth certificates nationwide. I have traveled all over the U.S. and to the London International Fringe Festival presenting my award-winning autobiographical play, **The Good Adoptee**, that tells the dramatic and often outrageous story of my adoption experience and advocates for the restoration of adult adoptees' access to our original birth certificates, a vital Civil Rights and Human Rights issue and one of Equality for all.

As I'm sure you are aware, my home state of New York just restored adoptees' unrestricted access to our original birth certificates, ending 83 years of discrimination and inequality and becoming the 10th and largest state with Equality for its Adopted Citizens. This happened with a Supermajority in the Legislature last June and Governor Cuomo's support and enthusiastic signature last November. The law went into effect January 15th and adult adoptees in New York are getting their original birth certificates every day now! Mine is on the way. Maryland now has the unique opportunity not only to be on the right side of history, but also to make history and become the 11th Equality State.

As an adult, I was shocked to discover that the birth certificate that I had grown up with for my entire life was a fake. It was not my original, authentic BIRTH certificate but rather, what is known as an Amended Birth Certificate, which was created when my adoption went through a year after my birth and lists my (adoptive) parents as if they gave birth to me instead of adopted me. I am an adult, after all, a contributing member of society who pays taxes! How could a random government worker have access to my most basic personal information and not me? I realized what a shocking civil rights violation was being perpetrated on me and my fellow adoptees - we were second class citizens under the law, denied access to this essential information that most non-adoptees take for granted. All other Americans have access to their original birth certificates. This is not right.

With technology, surveillance and consumer DNA, we live in an age of little personal privacy. Thankfully, we also live in a world where children – and the adult citizens they become – are no longer considered “illegitimate”. The draconian laws sealing original birth certificates protect no one, but rather perpetuate the shame and secrecy around adoption that was created decades and decades ago. Adoptees need to be treated like every other citizen. Otherwise we remain stunted as children, forever denied equality, civil rights and true citizenry (while every other obligation is required and met). It's time to put an end to this outdated and discriminatory practice and move forward. We need Equality.

If you would like to hear more of my personal story in an entertaining theatrical presentation with an exquisite and award-winning performance by actress Anna Bridgforth, please feel free to take a look at the video from an early Off Broadway performance of **The Good Adoptee**.

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUX85Z_mnu0&t=1s

Show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mD6roVEFgmg&feature=youtu.be>

More Info: www.TheGoodAdoptee.com

As I anticipate finally obtaining my own original birth certificate along with my fellow New York born Adult Adoptees who choose to do the same, and as I enjoy us all having legal access, I can only imagine holding my original birth certificate in my excited, shocked and grateful hands. Without even yet possessing that simple piece of paper, it means the world to me to have access to this sacred record of my birth and all that it entails and to be treated equally under the law like every other non-adopted American. I wish the same for my adoptee sisters and brothers in Maryland and across the nation.

This is an incredible opportunity for Maryland to be on the right side of history and help propel the tide in restoring civil rights, and yes, human rights, to Adopted Americans living in Maryland and join New York in leading the way towards Equality for All. It's not every day that you have the opportunity to end discrimination, restore civil rights and make the world a little more fair and just. We are counting on you to do the right thing.

Please vote YES on the bills and recommend passage of HB1039 and SB0743!

Thank you.

All my best,

Suzanne Bachner

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Adoptee, Playwright, Director

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