

**TESTIMONY: SENATE BILL 743    Submitted by: Linda B. Clausen, MSW  
February 25, 2020**

**Adoption: Access to Birth and Adoption Records and SEARCH, Contact and Reunion  
Services**

I very strongly support SB 743 giving all Maryland born adoptees access to a copy of their Original Birth Certificate.(OBC). This is so very important to their lives. I believe that whether age 18, or 60 years of age, seeing their original birth certificate will aid them in visualizing themselves in their full identity. In merging their original and adoptive selves, they will understand themselves in a healthier way.

I am a birthmother, and a Social Worker. I relinquished two children to adoption in the 60's. My youngest son found me in 1990. Not long after we met, he asked me to make him a copy of his OBC. I did not have a copy as I was not allowed. He was shocked, and wrote for a copy to VT. where he was born. He received it. That OBC represents the adoptee's beginning. It connects the adoptee with the person he/she was before adoption. I have heard many adoptees in the support group I facilitate., and the adoption conferences I attended state in numerous ways, its importance to them. We were reunited for 26 years; a healing 26 years for both of us.

A recent NY times article stated that 95% of adoptions are OPEN adoptions. With so many open adoptions, it is time for Maryland to change the practice of keeping the birth certificates of older adoptees hidden away

in 1958, 1968, and 1978 Dr. Paul Sachdev, a Canadian researcher, studied adoptive parent, adoptee, and birth parent attitudes toward open adoption records in *Unlocking the Adoption files* (1989). Sachdev, whose work is respected worldwide found that 69.7% of adoptive parents surveyed. as compared with 88.5 birthmothers, and 81.85 adoptees said that adult adoptees should be able to receive identifying information. In a book, *Ethics in American adoption*, L. Anne Babb, Ph.D. reported results of a 1994 study, conducted of the 50 state licensors of adoption agencies and 23 professional adoption-related or child welfare associations. The findings showed that the majority, 625 said that adult adoptees should be given access to their original birth certificates. Yet, here we are in 2020, still requesting that Maryland adoptees be able to have a copy of their OBC's.

PLEASE CLOSE THIS GAP. Give equal rights to each MARYLAND adoptee. Give adoptees access to their birth certificate if they want it.. Please pass SB 743. It truly means more than those of us not adopted can ever understand. Treat all Maryland born adoptees the same.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and for your consideration.

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