

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 a Maryland adoptee writing to ask you to support HB1039 and SB0743 that will provide all Maryland adult adoptees the right to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate and adoption records. It is paramount that these bills result in legislation that has NO exceptions and NO conditions. It is time for Maryland to end the secrecy imposed by the closed adoption system and put a stop to denying adult adoptees the right to know the truth of their origins.

Many opponents counter that birth mothers were promised secrecy, but this is not typically the case. My birth mother was not promised anything and I have not spoken with any birth parent that was promised anonymity. Opening previously sealed records will allow adoptees to directly contact their birth parents without resorting to commercial DNA testing that reveals themselves to other family members, thus preventing privacy in this very delicate situation. Direct contact will allow the concerned parties to move forward with privacy, if desired.

All adults should have the same access to their vital records and adult adoptees should not be subject to discrimination. We deserve the right to equal treatment under the law. I appreciate your time and attention to this matter.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Deborah Keys
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania
dkeys419@hotmail.com

I support Maryland HB1039 and SB0743

This is my personal testimony. I am a birth parent who surrendered my son to adoption in 1969. I was never promised, nor did I ever want confidentiality. I searched and found my son in 1998 when he was 29 years old. My son and I are fortunate to know each other and our extended families, yet still he does not have access to his Original Birth Records. I believe he, and all adopted adults, should have the unconditional right to access their Original Birth Certificate and records.

I have been on the Board of Directors of Concerned United Birthparents, Inc. (CUB) since 2006. In my work with CUB over these years I have met over a thousand birth parents at our annual retreats and at our monthly support group meetings. None of them want to be kept a secret from their own children.

Knowing one's original identity is a right that all citizens have *except* those who were adopted. This creates two classes of people in our country. This is wrong and must be corrected. I urge you to support this bill that would allow adopted adults to have what is rightly theirs.

Sincerely,
Patty Collings

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I am an adult adoptee and am a Maryland citizen. I support HB1039 and SB0743. I believe that at age 18 adoptees should be able to receive, upon request, a copy of our original birth certificates. This is just a matter of basic civil rights. If Maryland passes such legislation, it will not only be good for adult adoptees in Maryland, but will hopefully influence other states such as Virginia, where I was born and adopted.

When I contacted a lawyer in Virginia about getting my own original birth certificate, the lawyer discouraged me because such petitions are rarely granted. You have to show "good cause". I think to the contrary that it is the government that should have to show "good cause" for denying me the same type of birth certificate that other citizens take for granted. I am an adult tax-paying citizen, but in this one respect the government treats me like a perpetual child. It is very paternalistic and just wrong.

By the way, I have done DNA tests with Ancestry.com and 23&me. Now in Ancestry, I have two family trees, my adoptive tree and my biological tree. I've gotten into genealogy. I found an ancestor who was a Minuteman at the Lexington Alarm. I joined the Sons of the American Revolution. My point is that the laws haven't caught up with modern reality. I found my ancestry, and I enjoy it. Explain to me why it is in my best interest or the best interest of society that adults like me not have access to our original birth certificates? It makes no sense to me.

I respectfully ask that members of the Committees vote Yes on the bills and recommend passage of HB1039 and SB0743.

Sincerely,

Ed Knight

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

As you sit in this room, you may consider the privileges life has afforded you. Whether that be the ability to have access to good food, an education, or a job. But there is one type of privilege that goes unspoken. It is non-adoptee, or biological identity privilege. I am a Maryland adoptee. I was born in Baltimore, Maryland. Or, so it states on my amended birth certificate provided to me six years after my birth through adoption. It may seem small but I have come to know this information is inaccurate. Yet, denied any basic information about my life, I held onto any minute detail and built my whole life story around it. Much of what I was given to serve as the foundation for my life was inaccurate, and I felt as though I was living a lie my entire life. The details are not mine. To experience this is to feel as though the government has no respect for my identity as a person. I do not matter to this country.

As an adult I was able to take a DNA test. Thanks to science, the human right to know my identity has been provided to me. Sites like Ancestry and 23 and Me allow for adoptees to connect with people we know are our genetic relatives. However, without our original birth certificate we are still not made whole. It is dehumanizing to have to spend hundreds of dollars and endless hours trying to connect the dots. Throughout this process, we are treated as criminals for a crime we did not commit, and an agreement we had no legal decision over.

The adoptee experience is not something that can be fully comprehended by those who have not lived it. We are humans, like non-adoptees, who deserve equal rights as protected by this country. It is time Maryland remove antiquated restrictions and allow adoptees their original birth certificate. While society tends to infantilize the adoptee, we do not remain children our entire lives. At 18, we are deserving of all information that is rightfully ours. I ask that you bring our country into modern times and vote 'yes' on HB1039 and SB0743.

Thank you,

Christina Ritter

Maryland Adoptee

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RE: Testimony in Favor of Maryland Assembly SB0743 & HB 1039

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

My name is Rachida Djebel (née Llireva Jean Averill) , born in Cleveland, Ohio (1945) , adopted in Sarpy County, Nebraska (1950), and Maryland Resident since 1976. I am also a Viet Nam veteran (1963-1966). I have been an advocate for adoptee rights for many decades and work with adoptees to secure information regarding birth history.

I and my younger sister were abandoned in a dog pound in Douglas County, Nebraska in 1948 by our parents who kept our brother with them. Once found, my sister and I were immediately separated and I have not seen her since, nor have I seen my brother since that fateful day. My sister, born in 1947, was adopted at or shortly after 6 months in Douglas County, Nebraska, because of worse than Dickensian law, still refuses to give me any information regarding her, citing ‘confidentiality’---laughable since she and I share between 2000 and 3500 cMs of DNA.

DNA has confirmed my direct genetic ties to both maternal & paternal sides of my family, but has not produced matches with close family, siblings or parents, with the exception of one paternal uncle who I asked to submit a DNA sample just for the record..

Because of childhood trauma (abuse from both parents and adopters), all I remembered for years was that my father’s surname was Averill and that my siblings were taken away from me. I was 38 years old before I retrieved my OBC in a time when there were no advocates for adoptees. This because my Nebraska adoptive birth certificate had no city/county/state of birth listed on it, thus denying me a passport. That denial propelled and compelled me to determine where I was born and to whom. It was my right to know my birth origins and to secure the OBC. Ohio-whose laws were as Dickensian as Nebraska’s in 1982- agreed. Once I knew it was the place of birth. I petitioned the Court who agreed that I had shown just cause, and in turn provided me with a line-by-line exact copy of the original OH birth certificate CERTIFIED. Because the judge confirmed my rights, I was able to satisfy the Passport Agency’s requirements for my passport and,

more importantly, was able to give my son and now grandson the history and reality of mother and grandmother. DNA has proven genetic relationship to both my paternal and maternal families.

I urge respectfully that you grant Maryland's adoptees born in the state unrestricted access to their Original Birth Certificates by passage of these two bills which will return equal rights to adoptees born and adopted in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Rachida Djebel
1426 Harberson Road
Catonsville, MD 21228-1116
rachida1@msn.com

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Chairman Smith:

Advocates have been working on equal rights legislation in Texas and across the country for more than 50 years, going back at least to Jean Paton and Florence Fisher, considered two of the founders of the adoptee rights movement in the early 1970s. Like other states, Texas sealed and made adoptees' original birth certificates unavailable in the 1950s as a way to protect the adoptee and the adoptive family from outside interference.

Despite recent efforts in the Texas legislature to restore a right that had existed since statehood—including nearly unanimous support for a measure four years ago—Texas failed again to advance a bill to the governor this past session.

Do not let Maryland fail adoptees as Texas did in 2019.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Lusk
Austin, Texas
adrienne.lusk@gmail.com

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Chairman Smith:

I urge lawmakers to pass the bill allowing adoptees access to their original birth certificates. I think adoptees are discriminated against by not allowing them access to their biological information. I can't imagine going to the doctor and have to leave blank space for family medical history. I can't imagine having a conversation with a group of friends discussing their ancestors' roots and not being able to join in. I cannot think of a more basic right than your own birth certificate!

Thank you for considering this bill and I hope your heart tells you it's the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Mary Newman
Baltimore, Maryland
maryjnewman@verizon.net

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

As an adoptee and one who has spent thousands of hours and dollars to learn the truth about my origins, I strongly support HB1039 and SB0743 and all legislation that ends the discriminatory practice of denying me access to an official government record that every other non-adopted person is entitled to possess and that restores my right to obtain my original (pre-adoption) birth certificate. In spite of the conspiracy of secrecy, through a chance encounter by a dedicated Search Angel with a local legal notice concerning my birth in 1952 in Washington, D.C., and **my subsequent adoption in Maryland**, and later, through Ancestry and AncestryDNA testing, I am one of the grateful adoptees who searched and found both my maternal and paternal heritage and have been lovingly welcomed by many family members.

If the government is to be trusted to maintain accurate records on every individual, they should carefully consider the continuation of the practice of falsifying/amending them for spurious reasons and diligently work to address the injustices done to those of us affected by their questionable action in the past. I offer my thanks to the many community organizations and activists that continue to champion this noble but difficult cause throughout the USA and would just remind Legislators that, not only are adoptees' and their families' health and well-being at stake but also our birth Parents and Grandparents, our siblings and our Aunts and Uncles and Cousins and each of their family members too who are forced to endure the cruel and unfair consequences of keeping secrets.

Please feel free to share my story as you may deem appropriate and please feel free to contact me via email truthseeker52@aol.com should you have any questions or wish to know more of my story.

Carol Fox
Baltimore

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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

February 15, 2020

Dear Honorable Members of the Children & Family Law Committee:

My name is Melody Nordvik and I am a Seattle, WA born and adopted person. I have lived in Prince George's County Maryland for the last 48 years. I care deeply about changing our State's long standing discrimination against adoptees in accessing their Original Birth Certificate. A right should be inclusive to Everyone. Regardless of their adoptive status.

I ask each of you to consider what it's like to be a Maryland adoptee wanting to know your historical, genetic, and legal identity. How many of you OR your non-adopted constituents would agree to having to justify to judges, agency social workers, and vital records clerks why you have a desire to know your own origins?

I found my birth mother and extended family long before Washington State open records. I used DNA testing to learn the identity of my birth father. I can attest to you that there is no longer forever secret adoptions. But, I will also tell you that DNA search methodology left me in a position of divulging private and sensitive info to 2nd, 3rd and 4th cousins. It would have been much easier to protect my Fathers confidentiality by having direct contact with my birth father.

I respectfully ask members of this Committees vote Yes on the bills and recommend passage of HB1039 and SB0743.

Sincerely,

Melody Nordvik
13029 Martin Road
Brandywine, MD 20613
(301) 873-1291

To: Maryland Legislation of Bill HB1039

I am writing this testimony for the bill HB1039 and SB0793.

I am an adoptee who was adopted officially in Baltimore Maryland in June of 1965. In the year 2000 I contacted the Baltimore Department of Social Services for my non-identifying information. I was informed that both of my birth parents are deceased. I was also informed that my half sister was not able to be found as well. I am now 55 years old. Neither birth or adopted parents are living. I feel that at this age I should have the right to know all information about my birth parents and any siblings or relatives that are still living. I know that when I was 18 I was not emotionally strong enough to have handled any information that was given to me. As a parent myself and not being able to share any medical information has been very difficult. I also feel that having my culture stripped from me has caused me severe mental anguish and loss. To be able to have my original birth certificate and to have all of the records of my adoption would be a gift that I have waited for over 30 years. I feel that Bill HB1039 and SB0793 is a right that adoptees should be allowed to have. Please consider what has been lost by each child that has been adopted and how these bills can give back to each of us.

Thank you in advance,

Mary Kellermann-Bryant

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Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
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Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

My name is Catherine Treaster. I am 64 years old. My adoption happened in 1961 after mother had passed. I was separated from my brother and sister. The day I was adopted the social worker told me to forget my family. I have a new family. I felt like my heart would break and I still cry when I think about it. Everyone has the right for happiness. For adoptees is that little piece of paper that tells who they were when they were born. Please give our rights back and pass HB1039 and SB0743.

Thank you.

Catherine Treaster
Lusby, Maryland

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I'm writing to ask you to support HB1039 and SB0743, bills that will provide all Maryland adult adoptees the right to obtain a copy of their own original birth certificate without restrictions. I was born and adopted in the early 70's and endured a ten year battle for information about my own birth and adoption with the courts and the adoption agency and I can honestly say it was the most dehumanizing experience of my life. I'm a mother of four, a wife, and co-owner of a successful business. I've put three children through college, I vote and pay taxes yet I'm prohibited from obtaining a copy of my own true record of birth. I can't think of anything more infantilizing than the state treating one like a child who can't handle their own information.

I implore you to vote HB1039/SB0743 favorably out of Committee and once and for all, right a historic wrong and restore dignity to all Maryland adoptees. Adopted people deserve the same rights to know their origins, and access their own vital records, just like all other non adopted citizens in Maryland.

Respectfully,

Shawna Hodgson
Member, Board of Directors, American Adoption Congress, Washington D.C.

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I'd like to respectfully ask that members of the Committees vote Yes on the bills and recommend passage of HB1039 and SB0743.

As a child of adoption myself, I know first-hand the emotion that comes with not knowing one's origins. While I understand that in the past adoption has been shamed, it is celebrated now. And with DNA services (which is indeed how I was reunited with my own birth family), a preference of secrecy is simply a thing of the past. Most of us are able to track down our families without the state's engagement. However, obtaining access to one's own documents can have huge significance.

Though I know all of the content of my original birth certificate, and though I have the support of my adoptive and birth parents, because of where I was born and when, I'm still not entitled to it. For those of us with lost months or years before we were placed, this small thing has huge significance.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Bonsall

Delegate Luke Clippinger Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
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Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I was adopted in Montgomery County, Maryland when I was six years old in 1984. I was lucky that my adoptive parents wanted an older child and not a baby but it also meant that I was old enough to understand what was happening with my biological parents giving me up and the adoption process in general.

I've known and communicated with both of my biological parents for over 20 years but still the state of Maryland says that I don't have the right to my adoption records, specifically my original birth certificate. This document may seem like just a piece of paper, but it represents so much more to adoptees. These are the only records of my birth and circumstances surrounding my placement in foster care and subsequent adoption. My original birth certificate is the only indication of the name given to me at birth and the only documentation of who my biological parents were.

I respectfully ask that the members of the committees vote yes on these bills and recommend passing HB1039 and SB0743 and grant adoptees their basic civil right to know where they came from.

Thank you.

Katherine Runyon
Conway, South Carolina

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Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I was adopted at 3 days old. My father passed away in 2008, & my mother is 92 years old. They had no other children. I never married. When, G-D forbid, the time comes, when my mother passes away; I will have NO family! Everyone should have the right to know where they come from, & who they come from. I'm 63, so I doubt my biological parents are still alive, but, you never know. I don't know what it's like to hear . . . "You look just like your _____."

Maybe I have full or 1/2 siblings, cousins, aunts &/or uncles out there. I'd be happy if I could just find ONE! I need that connection! I know people who have found biological connections, & I've been told..."there's nothing like it!" I love the man & woman that adopted me . . . MY MOTHER & FATHER! I'm not looking to replace them, I'm looking for my biological identity. Please, consider my testimony when you're making your decision!!

Thank You So Much.

Ellen Jane Goldberg
Boynton Beach, Florida

February 17, 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 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 bills HB1039/SB0743. Please grant me the dignity and equal rights to my birth certificate before I die. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Michele Horrigan Trotter
18908 Tributary Lane
Gaithersburg, MD 20879
240-246-4986

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Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

My best friend spent her whole life (50 years) with unanswered questions about her birth parents. She finally learned who they were, her history, and her original birth name. She met her birth parents. Got written permission from both mother and father to open her birth records. She was hit with a roadblock. Although they could tell her she had letters and photos in a file, she's not allowed to see them. Even though both parents have okayed it, she can't see papers that are her personal records. Hospital, foster-care, original unedited birth certificates, etc. Even Carfax allows you to look at a car's total history no matter where it was owned. A human life is not owned by its parents. Babies should not be sold to parents like merchandise, with promises of anonymity. Adoptees should have the right to know everything they can about their heritage, medical history, and birth.

With DNA testing, it's only a matter of time before nothing is secret and wouldn't it be better for things to be above board in the first place? Let's open the records please.

Robin Luxenburg
Harwood, Maryland

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I am a Korean adoptee, long-time resident, and voter of Maryland writing in support of HB1039 and SB0743 because knowing where, when, and to whom you were born is vital information that should be available to every human being on this planet.

We say that the sins of the parents should not be visited on the children, but that is exactly what is done when adult adoptees are refused the right to know the very basics of their origins. We say that children should not be made to suffer for their parents' mistakes, but that is what happens when adopted children are denied the basic building blocks of identity.

By denying access to original birth certificates, the state of Maryland tells adult adoptees we are second class citizens, unequal in the eyes of state law. Please grant adoptees their basic civil rights and pass these important bills.

Alice Stephens
Silver Spring, Maryland

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

Good day members:

I am an adoptee, born in 1965 and **adopted in Maryland in 1966**. My original birth certificate and adoption records are sealed, as per the norm at the time.

Adult adoptees should be provided the right to their original birth certificate as is every other person in Maryland. We are the only group of people who have been denied our own vital record. This is a basic civil right/equality issue. It is also an issue of identity. Shouldn't adoptees have the opportunity to embrace their identity just as every other person does? DNA testing has made the sealing of original birth certificates and adoption records unnecessary and obsolete. I personally tested with a well known company and within 6 months I had the names of both of my birth parents and have been in contact with them since.

I respectfully ask that members vote yes on the bills and recommend passage of HB1039 and SB0743.

Robyn Sesso Sheffield
robynsesso@gmail.com
Bedford, Indiana

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I am writing in support of the bills HB1039 and SB0743 that are to be presented on February 20 and 25, 2020. **I was born in the state of Maryland in November of 1966** and given up for adoption and my records were sealed under the laws of the times. Unfortunately, all these years later these laws are still in existence in the state of Maryland. It is my belief that these laws are archaic and if I am to be completely honest, cruel. It is a basic human right to be allowed to know where one comes from. These laws originated with the purpose of protecting the privacy of adoptees and their adopted families but have with time been flipped in order to protect the birth mothers and fathers and their families. Through my readings and research, I have learned that in the majority of all cases the families of origin are more than willing to be contacted but are unable to be because of the current laws. While provisions have been made to assist in this dilemma (mutual consent registries and the like) it can be very expensive and is not enough. By supporting the bills being presented you will not only be affecting Maryland adoptees but adopted people across the nation by sending the message that Maryland will not discriminate against adoptees right to obtain their files and Original Birth Certificates.

With Appreciation,

Kristin Kjellson
Aurora, Colorado

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

As a mother to a child surrendered to adoption in 1966 and having been involved in adoption issues since 1990 I can assure you that most birthparents are hoping to know the fate of their children and want them to have access to their medical information and their family. The baby scoop era caused many children to be surrendered because these mothers were given no choices. They were not promised confidentiality. They also never received anything that they signed.

It is time to lift the secrecy for all those adopted in the United States. The truth will set them free. It is high time that every American have access to their information.

I urge you to please support this bill #HB1039 and SB0743 for equal access for those adopted in your state.

Margaret Susan Hoffman LyBurtus
Bakersfield, California

February 14, 2020

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RE: HB1039/SB0743

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

I am a sixty-seven-year-old woman and was born in Detroit, Michigan on September 11, 1952. My mother relinquished me at birth and I was sent to the Sarah Fisher Orphanage. When I was two months old a couple took me to their home then adopted me. I then soon became the eldest of eight adopted children and we also had a series of thirty-five foster children living with us until I reached the age of twelve. A little over twenty years ago I surprisingly and sorrowfully learned that **my daughter had traveled to Maryland, gave birth to my granddaughter then relinquished her for adoption to a couple who lived in the state.**

I have always been a strong advocate for Adoptees Rights and in 1993 founded and directed the "Adoption Identity Movement of NorthEast Michigan " Our slogan was "Knowledge Is The Key To Our Identity!" It is my heartfelt belief that adopted persons age eighteen and older should have the right to request and receive their own original unredacted birth certificates. Not knowing who my birth parents were, my heritage and medical history had a severe and profound impact on my life, especially as an adult. The secrets of my origins and circumstances of my relinquishment caused me to fantasize of endless scenarios and quite often left me with strong feelings of hopelessness, depression, at times paranoid and dealing with an acute identity crisis. This led to difficulties in most of my relationships that numerous other adoptees I've met through the years expressed they suffered with as well. Besides these psychological impacts not having access to one's own medical history is equally as devastating since it's imperative to be aware of inheritance risks which could be offset by preventative measures. I am well able to attest to this fact through my personal life story.

This is nothing short of a Civil Rights Issue. Allowing adoptees to obtain their original unredacted birth certificates would provide the answers to many of the questions we've

struggled with and agonized over since childhood and bring dignity to our lives! I am respectfully asking the Committee to vote YES and recommend the passage of HB1039 and SB0743.

I sincerely appreciate your time and efforts towards this life-changing issue.

Respectfully,

Michelle Terse St. Amant
Traverse City, Michigan

I was adopted in North Carolina in August 1970. My birthdate is August 10 and I was officially adopted in September 1970. From an early age, I knew I was adopted. My adopted mom was Japanese and I didn't look at all Japanese so there was no hiding the fact I wasn't her son.

I never really desired to search for my birth family during my childhood. I was raised in a very good home and was well taken care of. I think the only thing I wondered about was why...why did my mom give me up? Was I not good enough? Did she not want me? When I asked my adopted mom about any information she had on my birth mom, she told me my mom was very young when she had me and couldn't afford to take care of me and also didn't want me (I would later find out this was a lie). My adopted mom was very controlling and protective of me and would do just about anything to keep me. Later on life, I would resent her for this. I also believe that I had I looked even slightly like my adopted mom, she would have told me and others that I was her child!

So how did I find my birth family? Well that's quite the story. I actually had my mom's name as early as 2005 but because of being in the military and not really knowing where to begin, I really didn't pursue it. The state of North Carolina has sealed original birth certificates for adoptees so I had no access to my real birth certificate. The only way you can get it is through a court order and that's nearly impossible.

In 2015, I began reading more and more articles of people finding their birth families so I decided to give it a try. I joined a facebook group for adult adoptees from North Carolina. I put in some basic info and almost immediately, I got my birth moms name...the same name I had back in '05! Then about two hours later, I got info on my maternal aunt and got her facebook profile. When I looked at it, I saw she listed an email account. I put together a two paragraph email and must have read it a thousand times. I told my wife that once I send this, theres no going back. My aunt sent back a response almost immediately saying she really didn't have much information but it was possible because she did remember my mom going away but she didn't know the reason. She told me she would contact some family friends who may know. About two weeks later, my aunt called and confirmed that this was indeed my birth mother. She also told me I had a sister which I had always wondered about and wanted! I was overjoyed! My Aunt told me she wanted to tell my sister Tracy about all this before I contacted her. Then in March 2015, my sister reached out to me via facebook. We talked about a lot and then began talking everyday sometimes many times

a day. When we first talked on the phone, we talked for over three hours! It was like we had always been family!

I asked many questions about my mom to Tracy. She told me about my moms stroke and her condition. I really wanted to meet my mom, but Tracy and I both felt it would be best to wait a while. I prayed a lot and even sent my mom Christmas gifts for Tracy to take to her.

Then right after Mothers Day 2015, Tracy called me and said it was time for me to meet my mom! We set up a date, June 7 to come down and meet her. My wife and son traveled with me to South Carolina and met Tracy and her husband. We went to the nursing home and I stayed out in the hallway while Tracy was in with my mom asking her if she remembered having me. Initially, my mom said she didn't know, then eventually told Tracy yes she did have give a child up for adoption but didn't know whether it was a boy or girl. Tracy told her "well you had a boy and his name is Patrick and he wants to meet you." I came in the room and for the first time in my life looked my mom in the face! It was pure joy! I cried like a little baby. Tracy was crying too. We visited with my mom for over two hours. Before I left, my mom asked me when I was coming back and that she wanted to meet her grandson. The other thing that happened was that my mom and I spoke on the phone everyday! And we still do! She tells me she loves me and I tell her I love her! She called me on my birthday last year and wished me a Happy birthday for the first time in my life...I never thought I would ever hear her say those words to me!

Meeting my sister and my mom have changed my life in ways I never imagined! I knew going in there was a possibility my mom wouldn't want to meet me or want a relationship with me. It is a risk any time you go searching for your birth family, but for me it was worth it!

In closing I hope that this bill gets passed and that no adult adoptee has to go through this fight to get access to their original birth certificates. Had I had access to my original birth certificate I would not have to go through the hoops I did to find my birth family. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Patrick Hawes