

**February 20,2020**

Good afternoon. I am here this afternoon to speak in support of **HB 1039**. However, my story is a little different from others. I know and have always known who gave birth to me. But Maryland adoption laws in the 1950's sealed my original birth certificate and there are some unintended consequences, which I want to explain.

I was born in Baltimore City in 1952. My mother, Alice, died after giving premature birth to my sister in 1954. I had my third birthday 5 months later. Loving relatives on both sides of the family helped my dad care for my baby sister and me until he remarried in 1955. My "new" mom, Kass, had had a hysterectomy 5 years prior to this and thought that my "dad and the girls were a gift from heaven above". In her words to me later in life, she wanted to officially adopt us because my dad's business required him to travel and should anything ever happen to him, she didn't want us to be taken away from her. A decree of adoption was issued for my sister and me to my father and mom June of 1956 in the Circuit Court for Baltimore County. The adoption decree meant that my birth certificate would be "amended" to reflect Kass as my birth mother. To this day, I have never been able to obtain my original birth certificate, despite my appeal to the Circuit Court for Baltimore County in 2013 that contained many documents supporting the information you've just heard.

Five years ago, my grandson was born with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, which is the leading *genetic* cause of death in infants. My grandson died this past November having just turned 5 years old. Our family had never heard of this neuromuscular disorder nor was there any history of this genetic condition in the family that we knew of. However, I am a carrier of this gene. It is critical that there be open access to original birth certificates for my future generations who may need to better understand their own medical conditions. It would be an injustice to have them research the genealogy of Kass and not that of my birth mother, Alice.

In closing, I want to make it clear that though I've always had knowledge of my biological parents, it is nonetheless a travesty of justice that the only birth certificate I have gives the incorrect information as to which woman gave birth to me. I fail to understand why there cannot be two legal documents, one that accurately has Alice giving birth to me, and one that decrees Kass as my adoptive mother?

**HB 1039** would hopefully solve this issue for me and many others seeking to obtain what is rightfully ours as citizens, an accurate, legal and official birth certificate.

I very much appreciate your thoughtful and deliberate consideration of **HB 1039**.

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