

TESTIMONY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HB 1039 February 20, 2020

My name is Elizabeth Greenwell and I from Betterton, MD. I am in favor of house bill 1039. I'm in a unique position as both an adoptive parent and a birth mother. My oldest son is 22 years old and he was adopted from foster care. He was able to locate his birth mother and siblings when he was 18 because he was adopted from a state where he had access to his original birth certificate. I recognize as his adoptive mother that it was important for him to be able to connect with his biological family and learn about his past.

Many years after I adopted my first son and then had children of my own, I became very ill and they thought I might have cancer. At the same time, I found out that I was expecting. After a very difficult high-risk pregnancy, my husband and I decided to place our youngest child in an open adoption. It was the hardest decision that I have ever made. However, at the time we had several kids at home and I was so ill I was in a wheelchair.

I chose open adoption for my youngest son, however, I had very little rights as a birth mother. I am blessed to see my son on a regular basis, however, antiquated laws in many states mean that records are still closed.

Since placing my son, I have become an advocate for birth parent and adoptee rights. I learned *everything I could about the adoption triad*. I am a member of Concerned United Birthparents, I have participated in ongoing research, attended both face to face and online support groups, met with other members of the adoption triad at conferences, spoken to hopeful adoptive parents, and am a published author in the adoption field.

Research from childwelfare.gov shows that adoptees who have access to their biological family have better outcomes. It is a human right for adoptees to know their medical history, heritage, and have the opportunity to connect with people biologically related to them. The time of concealing records and keeping family secrets has long passed. Time has shown that this practice of lying to children about their past has caused damage both to generations of women who were forced to place their children for adoption and adoptees who were lied to about who they are.

In a time when 95% of adoptions have some form of openness, birth parents and adoptees deserve the right to have legislation that protects them from the secrecy of the past. Every birth mother and adoptee I know is in favor of legislation that encourages truth.

I urge you, as members of this legislature, to give adoptees the right that every human being should have, to access their original birth certificate and furthermore to allow birth mothers to access their adult Children's information.

In the most difficult time of my life, I chose adoption. My sons didn't choose to be an adoptees. It was a choice that was made for them. They deserve to know their story. And so does every other adoptee in this nation.

Thank you for your time.

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