
Renee Gelin

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Vermont House Committee on Judiciary

% Amber Burke
115 State St
Montpellier, VT 05633-5301
aburke@leg.state.vt.us

Re: Bill H.629 Proposing to permit disclosure of adoption identifying information to an adoptee

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Renee Gelin, and I am a mother who relinquished a child in 2011. I am also the founder of a national non-profit organization called [Saving Our Sisters](#). SOS is a family preservation focused organization committed to helping ensure families make informed decisions before applying a permanent solution to a temporary crisis. We provide direct action via mentoring, education, resources and information including details of how an adopted child's original birth certificate may be sealed upon adoption finalization depending on the state. A fact that the majority of adoption entities omit when working with expectant families considering adoption today. We have helped well over 1200 families make informed decisions over the last 10 years.

I am considered a 'newer' first/birth mother. I am from what society knows to be the 'open adoption' era - where everyone involved in the adoption of the child knows each other. Where the pregnant mother picks her unborn child's adoptive family and who she builds a relationship with prior to her child's birth. Where 'openness' via visits that include participation from both immediate and extended adoptive **and** natural/biological family members occur. Where adoptive **and** natural/biological family members know each other's names, addresses, birthdays and family histories. Where we **all** - the child's collective family - put the child first. Because that is what is best for him.

When I relinquished my rights to my son in that hospital room that Saturday evening in March 2011 surrounded by my son's father, my oldest daughter - my son's sister, my sister - my son's aunt and his new adoptive parents I had never been informed that my son's original live certificate of birth would be sealed

away and kept from him even after he turned 18. But after learning about the sealing of his original birth certificate many months later, it all of a sudden made sense as I remembered that the hospital records person who came to my room to complete his birth certificate information did not allow me to put my son's father on his birth certificate. When I asked why, she replied, 'We just don't in these situations.'

Our son, brother, nephew and grandson ***is not*** a secret. He did not enter into any contract. He did not agree to be treated differently from his peers. He did not agree to relinquish his family medical or genealogical heritage. In fact, he can't - it's in his blood.

I love our son with all my heart, and never ever would I, his first/birth /natural/biological mother, want to deprive him of anything or have him be treated differently than anyone else. I never believed that I would retain any rights or control over his right to obtain his original live certificate of birth.

My son will be an adult one day, and I feel very strongly that he should have the same rights as the children I am raising as well as all other non-adopted adults. Please do not treat Vermont adopted persons as a perpetual child and allow others to control their ability to exercise their decision to obtain their own original live certificate of birth - once a legal vital record.

Sincerely,

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