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Laurie Foster, CNM, MS, Vice President and Legislative Liaison for the Vermont ACNM
(American College of Nurse-Midwives) Affiliate

Thank you, Senators for taking my testimony today. I have been a midwife for over forty years, and I have worked closely with over 2,000 birthing families. Though most have not chosen adoption, I am familiar with the experiences of those who have. I have also seen the impact of the kinds of stressors that lead parents to this choice.

As I am sure you appreciate, giving up a baby for adoption is a very serious and difficult decision. It is truly heart wrenching to see a person go through the trials of pregnancy and then birth and hand their baby over to another person. Most birth parents who adopt out their baby do so from a deep belief that it will provide the child with a better life. For some, they wish the child to have opportunities they know they cannot provide, because of a variety of both social and economic reasons. For others it is a question of safety - protecting their baby and themselves from violent partners or family members. Another motivation can be that the pregnancy was the result of sexual assault, which can leave the birth parent feeling vulnerable and not able to cope.

Many birth parents wish to have contact with, or knowledge of, the life of their child. However, for some, this is not the case. Whether their reason is personal physical safety or emotional pain and trauma, I strongly believe it should be the birth parent's right to keep their identity confidential if they feel this is the best or safest path – for themselves and/or for others.

I support the idea of making information easier to obtain for adopted people. I am aware of what a significant factor this can be in their lives. However, the birth parent should always have ability to sign a non-disclosure request. And, when such a request is on file, the adoptee should receive a redacted copy of the birth certificate without the birth parent's identifying information.

It is important to note that a birth parent who does not wish to be identified would not be able to stand before a committee and testify. These are vulnerable citizens without the ability to represent themselves. It is critical that birth parents continue to have the right to choose to withhold their own identity and personal information. Most will not choose to do so, but to legislate that option away is a violation of the right to privacy and could pose potential risks.

I know you have heard a lot of testimony from others, many of whom feel differently. I hope you will balance the different interests. For the small number of birth parents for whom identifying information (including identifying information on the birth certificate) could pose a risk, please provide a pathway to privacy for them.