

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 14-133

HB5144

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THE CLERK:

On page 38, House Bill 252, or House Calendar 252, favorable report of the joint standing committee on Judiciary, Substitute House Bill 5144, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND PARENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION FOR ADOPTED PERSONS.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move the acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is on acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark, sir?

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Clerk has an amendment, LCO 4771. I would ask the Clerk to please call the amendment and that I be granted leave of the Chamber to summarize.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 4771 which will be designated House Amendment "A".

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THE CLERK:

House Amendment "A", LCO 4771 introduced by
Representative Johnson et al.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The gentleman seeks leave of the Chamber to
summarize. Is there objection? Is there objection?
Seeing none, you may proceed with summarization, sir.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this bill
deals with adopted individuals who would like to get
access to their original birth certificate.

In 1974, Connecticut sealed those adoption birth
certificate record records for adoptees. This would
actually allow access for adoptees through the
Department of Public Health.

The main reason being, Mr. Speaker, is for health
records. Obviously with medical technology moving
forward, adoptee individuals want to know their
lineage for health reasons.

We had discussion in the Public Health Committee
about people that wanted information on bone marrow
transplants and what have you.

Mr. Speaker, this strike-all amendment that we
have in front of us would open up adoptee birth

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certificates from 1 October 1983 onward. There's compromising language that we came about with efforts in the Chamber to reach.

In 1983 on 1 October, the actual form that the birth parent would sign to bring their adoption forward, on that actual document it said that the birth parent is aware that the child or youth upon reaching the age of their 18th birthday, may have the right to information, which may identify them and any other blood relatives.

So the state from that point put people on notice that we might do that and that's the compromising language in the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Would you care to remark? Would you care to remark further on House Amendment "A"?

You did move adoption, sir.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

I do move adoption, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir. The question is on adoption.

Would you care to remark on House Amendment "A"?

Representative Srinivasan.

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REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning, sir.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, just a few questions to the proponent of the amendment.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Public Health will issue an uncertified copy in line 150. Through you, Mr. Speaker, who then issues the certified copy? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the actual adoption certificate, or the birth certificate the adoptee would get would be an uncertified copy. The reason being, Mr. Speaker, the actual amended birth certificate will stay as the

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certified copy for legal reasons, because that will serve as the official legal birth certificate.

The adoptee will get an uncertified copy of the original one so that they would know the birth parents, but that could not be used as an official birth certificate for legal reasons.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, could the good Representative, and I want to thank him for all the hard work that he has done. I know how hard he's worked over the last months both in the Public Health Committee and here in the Chamber as well to make this bill a reality, hopefully soon when we vote on this.

Could the good Representative tell us the difference between October 1, 1983 and the prior years before that? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention the ranking member on

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the Public Health Committee's commitment to this issue and thank him for his efforts on this as well. I appreciate it personally.

Prior to 1983 on 1 October, the actual certificate that the birth parent would sign did not say anything about obtaining any legal information or documentation.

On 1 October 1983 forward, that information came about on every form that the birth parent would sign when they surrendered their parental rights.

For instance, my adoption actually occurred in July of 1983. My adoption, my birth certificate would still stay sealed under this bill. I could go to probate court for it, but it would stay sealed. But after 1 October that information came about on the certificate. Therefore, they were put on notice to do this. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

If we can keep it down to a dull roar so we can finish up our business for this evening.

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

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Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Representative for the clarifications between October, 1983 and the prior years.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, for somebody who wants to get their adoption papers prior to '83 do we have a process, and what is that process?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the adoptee who was adopted prior to 1 October 1983 can go into the probate court system. We have statutes on the books in Connecticut that will allow them to do that.

Interesting enough, Mr. Speaker, an adoptee could always go through the probate system, but the statutes are very complicated. The legal standard is a little vague and it is a little more difficult and time consuming and expensive, but the adoptee could do that.

For instance, I could do that myself, Mr. Speaker, if I'd like to since I would not be covered under this bill. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

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SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, in line 153 it talks about an adoptive parent's adult child or a grandchild. But could the spouse of the adopted person, could he or she qualify to get this certified, uncertified certificate? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, no, the spouse would not qualify as one of the individuals that could get to DPH for this. Perhaps the spouse could go to probate, I don't know, but at this point the spouse would not be included in this. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

And through you, Mr. Speaker, my final question is, when they do have the option of going to DCF and getting the form, where as you said it is very important, very critical to know what the medical

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history of the biological parent is, which is important for their own history from a health point of view and of course, their children's as well.

What would that certificate or the DCF certificate say with regard to the health status of the biological mother? Are you aware of what that form says? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. The adoptee would get an uncertified copy through DPH of their original birth certificate. At that point, they would be put on notice if there was a contact preference form at DCF or also medical history form as well.

As the adoption is moving forward, Mr. Speaker, the birth parents have an opportunity to fill out a contact preference form, a medical history form that is on record at DCF. The adoptee, when they go to DPH would be put on notice that those documents could exist at DCF and then they would then go to DCF to obtain those documents. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

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REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, if in the DCF form the adoptive mother, the biological mother, I'm sorry, the biological mother has requested that she not be contacted at all, but of course her medical history is available, then through this piece of legislation will we still be able to honor the request and not contact the biological mother? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, and the language is in the bill and it's in the statute. That contact preference form says either a) I elect to be contacted, I do not want to be contacted, or be contacted through an intermediary.

And that form would go to the adoptee. The birth parent would have filled that out if they wanted to and elected that option, but it's not a binding form, so the adoptee upon reaching getting the birth certificate could in fact go forward anyway and contact the birth parent.

Just so you know, through you, Mr. Speaker, I did have conversations with DCF and they're going to make

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a point on these forms to make it clearly stated on there that this is not a binding, legal form. They're going to make sure that's on there. I talked to DCF about this going forward. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, so as I understand that, the form that is in DCF where the biological parent mother may choose not to be contacted is not a binding document? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Yes. Through you, Mr. Speaker, my final question is, while I'm a little distracted here. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the certificate that is going to be obtainable from DCF in terms of the medical information, in terms of medical information, what

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kind of information, have you seen any of those forms? What kind of information is there, because we are going back in time and I'm not sure how elaborate those forms were with regard to the medical history of the biological mother? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the forms, the adoptive, the birth parent had the option to fill those forms out. Anecdotally through DCF not too many have done so, and obviously these forms were filled out at least 18 years prior, so a lot could have happened in those 18, 20, 30, 40 years of family history. A lot of things definitely could come up that weren't covered on that form.

So a) from what DCF said, there's not too many of those forms in existence because the birth parent didn't elect to fill it out, b) there could be a lot more medial track history that could have come about in the 18 plus years from when that form was filled out. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

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REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

So through you, Mr. Speaker, is that medical form information in your opinion, when you've seen this, because the biological mother probably is 18 in that ballpark, age wise when she's filled that form, may not have much of a medical history to begin with or may not be aware she may have a history but not be aware of.

So have you seen any form in your experience, and obviously you've done so much research, so much work on this, have those forms contained a lot of medical information that the forms are at DCF?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I have not seen one of these forms. From my adoption personally, one does not exist. My birth parents didn't fill out one, but I have been told there is not that much information on these forms because of probably the age and time period.

And we did hear testimony in the Public Health Committee from people that testified, that spoke about

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how they found their birth parents either in Connecticut or in other states and how during the time from when the adoption occurred and now, a lot of things change with the birth parents' medical history, from family members within that family and elsewhere, and that they felt very pleased and thankful and very, very happy that they found this information out, this medical history, that their physicians are using to treat them on illnesses. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, if the form that was at DCF says that the biological mother does not give consent to be contacted, as I understand, as I hear from you listening to this debate, it is quite possible that the mother can still be contacted even though she had opted out of that.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, that is correct and that is where the '83

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compromise came from, whereas the state put people on notice that this could occur on 1 October 1983 onward so that's why that compromise came about, because that could happen. Absolutely right. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the good Representative for all his hard work and for answering all these questions. I appreciate that very much and good morning, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning, sir. Thank you.

Would you care to remark? Would you care to remark further on House Amendment "A".

Representative Zupkus.

REP. ZUPKUS (89th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning, madam.

REP. ZUPKUS (89th):

Through you, I have a couple of questions for the proponent of the bill, please.

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SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, madam.

REP. ZUPKUS (89th):

Thank you. Through you, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the way the law is now, if you have a closed or an open adoption, you can go and find out the birth certificate through probate court.

Is that correct? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Zupkus.

REP. ZUPKUS (89th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And with this amendment on the bill, it allows after October 1, 1983 I guess three forms, or going forward three forms. But even if it's a closed adoption where we have signed a so-called contract with the person.

Now, when people give their children up for adoption, they're at all stages of their life. They

could be young. They could be older. They're faced with all kinds of things so they do this very bravely, quite honestly because they carry these babies. That's their choice to do that.

And I just feel that we are, they've done that through the goodness of their heart, and quite honestly given someone the greatest gift they could ever give them, their child.

So by them doing that, I find it very hard that a closed adoption when they're saying they don't want to be contacted, that we're saying well, that really doesn't matter. You can be contacted.

With that being said, as an adoptive mom myself of two beautiful girls, I find that the medical history is extremely important. I do agree that, I actually think that the medical history should be given at the time of adoption if you have it, because as things happen, your baby gets sick, we all freak out, we want to know any medical history and by having that it maybe could prevent something further down the road.

I just think that if they've given it up as a closed adoption, we owe it to them to keep that.

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So I guess, you know, as an adoptive parent, if you adopt a child as a closed adoption, you understand that, and you deal with maybe never being able to find their parents or whatever.

And what is the intent, through you, Mr. Speaker, what is the intent of this legislation? Is it for medical reasons? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, that is the primary intent is for the medical history, the medical records. And the Representative speaks to a very important point, and I appreciate her question.

This is a tough issue. This is a very emotional issue and it's difficult to talk it out. It's tough and I appreciate people's candor and discussion on this, and that is actually where that 1983 language came in because that's when the state officially legally, contractually, as the Representative might have mentioned, put people on notice.

But the primary motivation behind the bill and to opening up these records is for the medical history, and also for the individual adoptee's identity.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is something that has originally occurred in Oregon in 2000. They've been doing it for 14 years without any real problems or negative feedback. Recently Main has done this. New Hampshire has done this. Rhode Island has done this.

Last year Illinois and Ohio passed legislation opening up these adoption records and just this week New Jersey signed their bill into law. Colorado has a bill that passed both houses waiting for a signature.

So this is more of a movement forward by a lot of states to look into this issue and to open up these birth certificates for the medical records, especially because as medical history and medical development have gone on, it's becoming more and vitally important for that reason.

So that is the primary motivation, Mr. Speaker, and it's also something that we are keeping on par with a lot of states, a lot of our neighboring states in doing so. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Zupkus.

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REP. ZUPKUS (89th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess for my last comment, again, I understand the importance of medical records and again, I think it should be actually from day one when you get the child.

But I do feel that, you know, why are we even giving them a form to sign whether they want to be contacted or not when they could be contacted?

So thank you for your comments. I appreciate them and we'll see how it goes. Thank you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, madam.

Would you care to remark further on House Amendment "A"?

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning, madam.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

It's been an interesting conversation. Just a couple of things to the proponent of the bill.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, madam.

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REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

You know, we just heard about, I want to just comment that we just heard that how important these health forms are and the health information. I think everybody in this Chamber understands that and I have to ask, that is important and there has to be a way to do it.

But I want to ask the proponent of the bill just to reiterate because I want to make sure I heard this right. If a biological mother fills out the medical forms that are so important and gives them and then just says I do not want to be contacted, that will not be honored. Is that true?

Through you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, that is correct. The actual contact preference form is not legally binding. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

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And through you, Mr. Speaker, an adoptive parent, parents that adopt these children, are they required by law to inform their children that they're adopted?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, from my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, no but I am not 100 percent sure on that.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Mr. Speaker, obviously that's a concern of mine. We seem to discriminate one mother from another mother. One has rights of privacy and to make choices and one has losing her rights in a privacy today.

We talk about a binding agreement. Today we're deciding not to honor binding agreements in the state.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, (inaudible) aware that the State of Connecticut has any kind of reunion registries or any action that would allow a birth

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mother or an adopted child to connect if they so choose, if both people decided to connect?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, that I am unsure of and don't know. I will comment, Mr. Speaker, that no matter what, how this been, the birth certificates were sealed in 1974 but the adoptee always had the right to go to probate, so I respect the Representative's concern and I understand where she's coming from. It's a very difficult issue.

But throughout this process, the adoptee could always go to probate. Vin Russo and others in probate, I'm working on this bill and working hard to draft language, mentioned that probate unsealed seven adoptee birth certificates last year alone, so this is currently happening.

What this bill does is simplifies it, makes it a lot more equitable, consolidates it at DPH, but this is actually ongoing. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

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Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

And one last question. As far as testimony, we heard about testimony and people wanting to go, to do it a certain way or believed one side of the bill.

Would it be fair to say that most people that do want to keep these adoptions private personally were unable to testify at the public hearing?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the Public Health Committee. I was there for the hearing. We had a wide range of people who spoke and also submitted testimony.

I will rely on a statistic that 95, the most recent poll, 95 percent of birth mothers that were polled were okay with the idea of releasing these birth certificates. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Well, just to sum up, Mr. Speaker. If 95 percent of birth mothers were okay with this, then they're meeting these registries. They're putting the names in. They're telling the adoption agencies that they would like to be contacted.

It's that five percent that we made a binding arbitration, a binding agreement with many years ago.

You know, I'm of the age where there was no legal abortion in those days and the Catholic Church came to these young women and convinced them that the right thing to do was to put their children up for adoption. It most likely was one of the toughest decisions these young women made.

And now, many of them, according to the proponent of the bill have now reached out and would like to meet their biological children and they have every right to do that as the biological children desire.

But what we're saying to these parents is, we're not going to treat you equally as the adoptive parent who has the right to decide not to tell their children they're adopted. That's their right as a parent. But we've taken the rights from our biological mothers, especially mothers.

This bill I think is aimed more at women than men and you know what? 1985 and 1983 is a compromise. I understand that. But I'll tell you, I remember the day when those were agreements that were trusted and people made very, very tough decisions. It's a very hard thing, I'm sure.

And to think that we take that so lightly in this Chamber today is very unfortunate, and so I can't support the amendment. I do appreciate Representative Alexander's passion on this. I understand the importance of a health form. Nobody is debating that.

What we're debating about is a woman who 15 years, 20 years ago made a decision, the biggest decision of her life and she made sure that child was born and put in a good home and has decided, maybe she's only the five percent to keep this private.

And we're saying to her today, you do not have that right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, madam. Do you care to remark further on House Amendment "A"?

Representative Bolinsky.

REP. BOLINSKY (106th): .

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, good morning to you. I have a couple comments and I think I'll work my way into a question for the proponent as well, but what I'd like to do is share a personal story.

I have a biological mother, which I think everybody here does as well. Funny thing happened, though, in April of 1990, I was born in 1958, by the way, so at the ripe old age of 32 years of age, I got a phone call from my parents and in that phone call I was asked if I was sitting down and at that time I learned that as a 32-year-old I shared a biological mother with an older brother.

Interesting, because it wasn't just in the Catholic Church where there was this propensity to, you know, protect life, but also to you know, take birth mothers, biological mothers and put them on a farm. So it wasn't just the Catholic Church. It also happened in Jewish families from which I come.

So, my mother, who was a teenager at the time, was, let's just say a victim of an unfortunate circumstance and she, as a resident of Queens, New York was sent to a relative's home in Connecticut and gave birth to a young boy who was four years older

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than I am right now and like I said, in 1990, April, I found out I had an older brother.

That older brother was welcomed into our family, although it had the potential to fracture the entire family. My father, bless him, welcomed Reuben into the family as well and we experienced well, some mixed emotions. My initial reaction was, what the heck does he want, and it was explained to me that he was looking for the medical records, even though my mother had on her paperwork, wishes not to be contacted.

She was tracked down and mind you, this is a pre-1983 adoption, so the records were not available through probate. So my older brother had retained a private investigator and basically bought the records through probate.

And you know, with the presumption that we were interested in the help of one of his children, the potential for fracturing my family existed. We had a relationship, a quasi-relationship with my older half brother for about six years and this person who had essentially cheated his way through the probate system and acquired records in a way that was probably less than legal, wound up becoming a felon anyway, and went

to jail, and we since terminated the relationship with this individual.

But I have to go back just for a couple of moments to the ideas that came from Representative Zupkus. It's perfectly understandable and I believe that it's, it happens to be what I would consider to be good adoptive practice to share medical records.

As far as going against the wishes of a young mother and possibly fracturing an entire family, and believe me there was some fracturing that happened, despite the welcome of my father.

There are still open wounds in my family and you know, my wish would have been for Reuben to have gotten the medical records through the adoptive agency and stayed the hell out of my life.

But I go back one more time and I ask, is there a way to you know, if we pass this bill or if not, is there a way to amend this bill before or after the fact, to create, through you, Mr. Speaker, to create access to medical records without denying, what I consider to be the right and the will of somebody who's filled out a do not contact form.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

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Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the honesty and candor of Representative Bolinsky and his comments and to be that open about his personal history and it speaks to the emotional tone of this issue. It's an important issue and it's a difficult issue. It's an emotional issue.

And it's an issue that is tough all the way around and there's no simple answer, and there's no simple solution to this issue at all.

I will say, I respect and understand where the Representative is coming from, Mr. Speaker. In talking with the Department of, DCF and DPH and probate, one thing about this bill, Mr. Speaker, the agencies and state government that would administer it came together, came to an agreement that this is the right thing to do on a policy grounds and administratively came together with state agents and also attorneys from different agencies to write this bill, to make it administratively correct.

And in the course of the drafting of this legislation, that discussion did come up, Mr. Speaker,

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and administratively it was a conclusion of the agency that that wouldn't be feasible at this time.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Bolinsky.

REP. BOLINSKY (106th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the proponent's explanation and I will just continue to stand and ask, you now, if there's a way to protect the privacy of somebody who's do not contacted while providing that information, I would certainly encourage that.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to share that story. It's actually been about 15 years since I've even spoken about it, but thank you very much.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Would you care to remark further on House Amendment "A"?

Representative Flexer.

REP. FLEXER (44th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

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Good morning, madam.

REP. FLEXER (44th):

Mr. Speaker, I think the discussion that we're having here this morning demonstrates why this has been such a difficult issue before this General Assembly for such a long time.

And while I appreciate and agree with many of the comments that have been made on this, I also appreciate the compromise that has been reached here in looking at folks that signed a form from 1983 going forward.

I do want to say for the record, that I do wish the contact preference form was binding, that we could protect that five percent of people who do not wish to be contacted and perhaps not disrupt their lives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, madam.

Would you care to remark further on House Amendment "A"?

Representative Rebimbas.

REP. REBIMBAS (70th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, also just briefly, I think I need to clarify and/or possibly even correct a statement that was previously made.

I believe that the bill that's before us is a compromise from Legislators that had strong interest in the bill. There has been no agreement regarding agencies per se as to how to proceed with the bill. Certainly the agencies were consulted regarding the language. Certainly probate court did indicate that even their process could be better with some language.

But certainly this was not an agreement for adoption agencies and probate court that were advocating for any, you know, one thing. This is certainly a bill that came before us based on the individuals that had an interest in the bill, the appropriate agencies testified at the public hearing and they were consulted regarding the drafting of the bill, but this is, what I believe, based on my conversations, not an agreement reached by any particular departments or agencies, certainly compromises by the Legislators.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, madam.

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Would you care to remark further on House
Amendment "A"? Would you care to remark further?

If not, let me try your minds. All those in
favor of House Amendment "A" please signify by saying
aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Those opposed, nay? The ayes have it. The
amendment is adopted.

Would you care to remark? Would you care to
remark on the bill as amended?

Representative Molgano.

REP. MOLGANO (144th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, sir.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning.

REP. MOLGANO (144th):

Mr. Speaker, the effect of this bill violates a
confidence assured to biological parents who made a
decision to place their children up for adoption. To
guarantee providing them a protected confidentiality
is not something any person or body should take
lightly.

It not only defies a confidence. The removal of anonymity to present a risk to the very lives of unborn children.

The law as it stands allows the ability for adoptees to reunite with their biological parents. Contacts for reasons such as acquisition of medical records or family medical history is possible today through the courts or directly through agencies.

It also affords adoptees to achieve these goals while at the same time adhering to the privacy desires of their birth parents.

Connecticut's current law gives protection to birth parents, allowing them to decide whether or not they wish to be reunited with their child they put up for adoption at birth.

The necessity of proceeding to an established legal process provides the right to consent with all parties agreeing to such a reunion.

Furthermore, this life-changing decision, when considered by a minor today, requires the counsel and signature of a guardian ad litem.

Mr. Speaker, we as a Body just days ago passed legislation because of concerns raised on the conduct

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of guardians ad litem. The bill we passed makes clear the need to oversee these court appointed individuals.

Mr. Speaker, the choice of a minor to put a child up for adoption should require consent by parents.

Mr. Speaker, in such a life-changing decision, a minor is advised and counseled by a parent or parents on the choice the minor will be making.

Mr. Speaker, with the need for parental consent by a minor in the case of adoptions, I would be remiss if I did not bring to the attention of my colleagues the requirement of parents to provide consent for adoption giving rise to another serious life-altering decision, abortion.

Mr. Speaker, if we do nothing at all today, present Connecticut law requires an adult to sign for a minor in the decision on an adoption, yet a minor deciding to abort her baby needs no parental consent. I cannot make sense of this.

The parent who is a minor of this same unborn child whose life weighs in the balance, receives adult counsel when considering adoption, but leaves the decision of abortion to her alone at 13, 14, 15 years of age.

Beyond the fear and confusion this child is experiencing, the thought of a young girl in the hands of a person like (inaudible) is not a comforting thought.

I fully am aware of young girls as victims of assault. I would never consider putting them in harm's way. Moreover, I cannot overlook the serious and life-altering decisions a child is facing at times like this and I think parental counsel and consent already required of adoption should be required in an abortion as well.

Mr. Speaker, I hope to be sitting in this Chamber on the day these children are given this necessary and essential protection. Thank you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Would you care to remark? Would you care to remark further on the bill as amended?

If not, staff and guests to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please return to the chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Will the members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast.

If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally. The Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5144 as amended by House "A".

Total number voting	135
Necessary for passage	68
Those voting Yea	106
Those voting Nay	29
Those absent and not voting	16

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill as amended passes.

Is there any business on the Clerk's desk?

THE CLERK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have late read-ins, favorable reports, Senate Bills

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

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The Senate will stand at ease.

(Chamber at ease.)

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will come back to order. Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

I did find that. It is in Section 71.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President. I appreciate the good Senator's answer to that question.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark? If not, Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes, Madam President. If there's no objection, I ask that this item be placed on our Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, ma'am. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 23, Calendar 548, Substitute for House Bill Number 5144 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND PARENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION FOR

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ADOPTED PERSONS. Favorable Report of the Committee on Public Health.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the House.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark?

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes, Madam President. The history of this legislation as it went, made its way to the Public Health Committee is one that incorporated many work, the work of many, excuse me, different agencies, including representatives of our Judicial System as well as the Department of Public Health and Department of DCF.

I am just going to delineate the highlights of the legislation for the Chamber. If an adoptee was adopted on the first of October, 1983 and onward, the adoptee would be eligible to go to DPH to get their birth certificate.

The adoptee would go to DPH and DPH would confirm that the adoptee was adopted on that date or forward. The adoptee would pay a \$65 fee to receive their original birth certificate, which would be called an uncertified copy.

If the birth parents signed a contact preference form or health history form, then the adoptee would get the paperwork stating that they would be told to go to DCF to get that. As you can see, you can go to DPH and then go on to DCF for more information.

Also, the adoptee would then go to DCF to get the forms and the paperwork from DPH would annotate that these documents existed at DCF.

The original birth certificate is being called uncertified because the amended birth certificate will continue to serve as the adoptee's legal birth certificate.

There are also various changes regarding the probate process and some technical clean ups. I certainly hope that the Chair, and health records, too. Thank you, Senator Meyer.

I certainly hope that the Chamber will support the legislation. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President. I am supportive of this legislation. I do have a few questions, if I may, through you to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR WELCH:

I just want to make sure I understand a few things and first is, there are a lot of, I think moving parts with respect to court systems and Public Health and DCF and it was my understanding prior to this bill being passed in the House, that at least those agencies are on board with the technical process that is here and then their support of at least the technical side of things.

Is that a correct understanding, through you, Madam President?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Madam President, yes.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President. And I also understand that this date allows one to, excuse me, this bill allows one to request a copy of a birth certificate, but only up to a certain date. I believe that date is 1983. Is that correct? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Madam President, October 1, 1983, yes.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President, and I understand the importance of that date is, from October 1, 1983 up and to present time, those people who were birth parents and putting their child up for adoption, were at least notified that there might be a potential that one day their children might be able to find out who their birth parents are?

Is that correct? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President, I appreciate that answer.

And then I guess the last question that I have follows on the conversation or the discussion that Senator Gerratana had with respect to the health records. So it sounds like to me that through this bill, a birth parent can leave his or her health records and that a child who's been put up for adoption can obtain just those records rather than the birth certificate. Is that a correct understanding? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President. I fully appreciate that, and those are all the questions I have for Senator Gerratana.

I fully appreciate that, you know, this is a very sensitive topic for many people. It's a sensitive topic for children who have gone through the adoption process. It's a sensitive topic for parents who might have put their children up for adoption and maybe have requested that they do not want to be contacted and it's a sensitive issue for adoptive parents who maybe want to just make sure that they have that bond with that child and that nothing interferes with it, so there really is a lot to balance here and there's a lot of emotion.

And I think this bill kind of goes a long way to at least consider the various interests and the various disclosures that have happened over the past, to balance that out and kind of come to a way where at least children can find out what their potential genetic health situation might be and also potentially reconnect with their birth parents at some point in time.

Again, I will be supporting this bill. I thank you for the Chamber's help.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark?
Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL:

Thank you very much, Madam President. In years past, I have opposed this legislation and I will vote no this evening, but I do want to commend that advocates. My own State Representative David Alexander is with us here in our Senate Chamber. He's been a fervent advocate for this legislation since the beginning of this short Session.

I also appreciate the fact that both Representative Alexander and other advocates moved to amend the bill in the House. I'm one of those people crazy enough that sometimes when I leave here, when I get home I turn on the TV and watch CT-N and if the House is still going, I'll watch what they're still doing, so I actually caught the tail end of the debate on this particular bill and I thought everybody did a fabulous job.

There were some heart wrenching moments. The good Representative from Newton revealing that he actually had an adoptive brother that he was not aware of and he actually, through his colloquy and his statement in opposition to the bill said that the revelation of that individual had the potentiality to cause some real friction in his family unit.

And I was quite amazed. You would think that finding that you have some long lost sibling would be wonderful, but he actually concluded his statement on the floor of the House by saying that ultimately he had wished that it would never have been brought to their attention. So there can be stressful situations created.

I will say this. While I still share some of the, I still have some of the concerns that I've had over the years, I believe that the bill that we have before us this evening is much better than the ones than the ones we've debated in the past.

This debate has been very difficult when my Representative, Representative Alexander came and chatted with me about this bill and he actually indicated that he, himself had been adopted. I indicated to him that I had been lobbied on this issue very forcefully by my friend and colleague, now the Mayor of Bridgeport, former Senator Bill Finch, who was in tears here in the Circle saying, I will never know who my birth parents are, and yet I had to debate that issue with him and tell him that I could not support the measure.

That being the case, I will conclude, because I don't want to prolong this, and to be honest, here in the Senate, we got all the time in the world the way we can operate when we really put our minds together.

I can't imagine, as much as I understand the policy reasons for and against, and while on balance I'm still in opposition, to my mind there's two things that one cannot help be sensitive to.

One, I can't imagine what it would be like to go through an entire lifetime not knowing who my birth parents were. And for those that are adopted, as much as the parents that raised them are fabulous and warm and loving, and I know, and I have known for years Representative Alexander's mom and dad and they are fabulous human beings and I hope they're watching or they get a tape of this at some point, because to the Alexanders, you raised a great kid and you're tremendous people for the Town of Enfield and north central Connecticut.

But what about those that just want to know their birth parents and will never know? That's a huge question mark that will always be in someone's mind, and that was really why former Senator and now Mayor Finch had tears in his eyes when he debated this bill on the floor of the Senate years ago. I will remember that to this day.

The other important factor, though, and I think this is where we're making headway and there's been real progress is, all things being equal and maybe we can revisit this or maybe not.

But with huge advances in medicine and treatment and studying genetics and really drilling down deep into what makes us who we are, our DNA and RNA strands and all of that, we have a moral obligation to at least make sure that if people have an ability to get medical information that can help them plan their lives, then we have a responsibility to not impede that.

So I understand the argument that if a person, if a woman is confronted with the fact, do I take a child to term and then turn it over to adoption, versus, do I have an abortion, that's a decision as a male I will never have to make. But that's a huge decision, and I wouldn't want anything weighing against bringing a child to term and offering it to adoption.

And I know the argument has been made heretofore that if you feel that you're not going to be contacted, we shouldn't be changing those rules going forward. But we're at a point now where the pendulum is sort of equidistant from both sides and I think that if everybody going forward understands more clearly what the rules are, I would hope that on balance, a woman with a child that feels that she and maybe her spouse or whomever don't want to raise the child themselves, I would hope that the prospect of having that child come back and visit would not necessarily be such a huge reason not to bring that pregnancy to term to afford that child a chance at life and a family.

Because on balance, I would hope that that would carry extreme weight, because in all of this, I have not met

any child who was adopted who said, I really wish my mom didn't give me life. I have never met that individual, ever.

But we do have to take careful consideration of what goes through someone's mind when they're facing that extraordinarily difficult decision.

So on balance, I'll be a no. I want to commend the advocates for doing a really good job this year in a short Session of making their case, not being afraid to make changes to the underlying bill to try to create a broader set of support here in this building. That's how we get things done.

Some people look at these things and say, why can't we operate more stridently as opposed to incrementally, but in the great scheme of things we've discussed this afternoon how quickly time passes, and if you look at the progress of this issue, it has progressed dramatically in just the period of time that I've served here as a Senator.

So I do believe we have an ethical and a moral and a public health reason to make sure as much health information is available to children who have been adopted so that they can make incredibly important life decisions going forward, but on balance, I'm still walking the path of being a bit cautious when it comes to this issue.

But again, I think to be fair, the advocates have done a sterling job of addressing an issue that's been before us for at least two decades, over two decades that I've served in this Chamber, and I look forward to continuing this discussion in the years to come. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Musto.

SENATOR MUSTO:

Thank you, Madam President. Not to extend this debate at all, I'm not going to bring up any other points. I'm not going to talk very long. But just on behalf

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of now Mayor Finch who sat in the 22nd District before me and was such a strong advocate for this bill, and on behalf of some of my constituents, some of whom may be watching tonight and some of whom are not, I, with others, have been an advocate of this bill since I got to this Legislature.

I'm in strong support of it tonight and I hope the Chamber will adopt it. Thank you very much, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator McLachlan.

SENATOR MCLACHLAN:

Thank you, Madam President. I rise reluctantly to oppose the bill. I'm very concerned about the impact this decision will have on adoption in the State of Connecticut.

I do concur with Senator Kissel's comments that indeed, the medical records ideally would be made available, but those medical records must be made available anonymously and unfortunately, I must oppose. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise with the similar concerns that were just expressed by my colleagues, Senator Kissel and Senator McLachlan. I think they expressed the conflict that we have with wanting certainly to identify with those children that were adopted and their need both for medical reasons and even for emotional reasons to reconnect or to connect with the biological birth parent.

But on the other hand, we believe, those that have just spoken, that it's even greater tragedy, a much greater tragedy for a child not to be brought to life because of the fear of exposure to who knows what?

And it could be something so damaging, so difficult, incest, rape, or any other situation that we couldn't even comprehend.

And if in fact the rules when this child was brought to term and given up for adoption were that their identity would be protected, I think it is morally wrong for us to change the rules in years later and I would have to say that this is an issue that the wonderful Chairwoman of the Public Health Committee, Senator Gerratana and I actually debated at length years ago when I was still in the House. She was in the House. She was Chairman of the Human Services Committee. I was the Ranking Member of the Human Services Committee at that time and this bill came up even then and that was some time ago, at least over a decade ago.

And at that point, we actually did hear from the mothers who wanted to protect their identity, that explained in very painful terms what this bill could have done to their lives, how it could have been so disruptive that actually they felt it could ruin their lives.

So we have to be cautious about that, and in fact I even ran this by currently, very currently, an intern that I have that is and was adopted, and asked how he felt about it. So, not to the mother, now to the actual adopted, now young adult and he felt very strongly, I might add, that he would, if push came to shove, he would prefer that the privacy was protected and I was surprised at that, because I believe that in his mind he would have rather have been given up for adoption. He was very fortunate to be with a lovely, lovely family right now and I think that there are certain circumstances.

Now, if I could just get some clarification, because again, I'm leaning towards no, but through you, Madam President, if I could ask a couple of questions just for clarification so I know that I'm --

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, ma'am.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you very much, Madam President. Through you. In fact, if it could be clearly explained that prior to a certain year that this does not apply, or would this open the door to any adoptions, you know, going backwards, rather than just being, going forward? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Thank you, Madam President. Two things you should know, Senator Boucher. One, that this requirement starts July 1, 2015, just so you know the effective date.

The other is that these adoptions were finalized on or after October 1, 1983.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President. And for clarification then, any adoptions prior to 1983, the previous rules would apply? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Madam President. Yes, they would have to go through the courts.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

That would be current.

THE CHAIR:

Sorry.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

In other words, that's our current policy, what we have in place today. That would not change current practice? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

And through you, Madam President. Thank you, Madam President. And through then, if this were not in place and we didn't pass this new rule, how does that currently state.

In other words, I thought we had any adoptions after a more current date would be open to all, is that correct, to all that were requesting it? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Through you, Madam President, as I understand it, if someone who was adopted currently, they and if they wanted access to the birth certificate that was issued at the time of their birth, they would have to go through the court system, petition the court, and there are certain parameters and restrictions and requirements that the court, of course, in a judicial setting would ask of the person petitioning for their birth certificate. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you, may I ask please why the date of 1983 was chosen rather than say the year 2000 or, you know, the current date going forward?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes, through you, Madam President. I think Senator Welch explained it best. This was a date that was agreed upon by the proponents of the legislation that would make the adoption effective as I recall. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you very much and I apologize for asking a question that was answered previously. Many of us are running back and forth at this late hour on multiple different subjects and bills.

Thank you so much for the answers and for the wonderful work and great intentions of the Public Health Committee.

I will conclude my remarks by saying that I still have some trepidation about this. I'm still very concerned about the fact that we don't want to do anything to dissuade someone from possibly bringing a child to term and putting that child up for adoption. I think that's always the better approach.

If this could in some to deter that and cause someone to move in the direction of abortion, I think that would give me pause in order to really support the bill at this time. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark?
Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President. I'm going to be very brief so we can proceed to a vote on the bill before us.

Madam President, I rise in opposition to the bill before us. While I acknowledge the very difficult issues acknowledged by Senator Kissel and the important need of medical records to be gotten by children who were put up for adoption, I think at the end of the day the fact that this bill allows for the possibility that a birth mother who has asked not to be contacted or not to have her information given out can be known through the birth certificate is my reason for opposition.

We all talk about the process and the time as it ticks toward midnight, Madam President. The other day I had some amendments on the bill, talked to a number of advocates. I respect their passion. I respect their position. At the end of the day it is not my desire to use the clock to thwart the will of the majority in our Body here.

So I understand and respect the fact that I will be in the minority on the vote, but nonetheless, I think it's important to let the majority have their say and let the vote be had. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, sir. Will you remark? Will you remark?
If not, Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote?
The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

Immediate Roll Call has been ordered in the Senate.
~~Immediate Roll Call ordered in the Senate.~~

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kelly. All members have voted? All members
have voted? The machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk,
will you please call a tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill Number 5144.

Total number voting	36
Necessary for passage	19
Those voting Yea	31
Those voting Nay	5
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The bill passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, if the
Clerk would call the items on the Consent Calendar, we
might proceed to an immediate vote on the Consent
Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 30, Calendar 591, House Bill 5537.

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good. There he is. Thank you.

REP. DIMINICO: I heard my name was called twice. I said I better not strike out for the third time.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Well, there are many things going on.

REP. DIMINICO: It's not too often I get inside the table to speak. I -- could morning to both the Chair -- Chairlady as well as all members of the Public Health Committee.

As I said earlier, I don't speak too often, but I feel very strongly about Bill 5144, AN ACT -- AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND PARENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION FOR ADOPTED PERSONS.

I became aware of this matter early on in the spring through a constituent of mine. And to my dismay, when she told me what the state's statute was, I was quite surprised.

I had the opportunity to sit down with the group and just kept my ears open and my -- my mouth shut and listened to what they all had to say, and it was quite moving, to say the least.

The stories are -- are sometimes gut-wrenching. I think this bill offers up a very good compromise. It provides the -- the adoptee access to their original birth certificate, as well as providing information for the medical history, which is almost equally as important.

It does not threaten the birth parent. The birth parent may have the right to redact their name from the original birth certificate.

Now, things are a little different today. Years ago, when children we having children, it was all about secrecy and shame. Times have changed.

Today, it's really about what's in the best interest of the child. And I always say not only does -- does events and time can change, but people change.

When -- when the birth parent, at a very, very young age, was informed of the rights, they're a lot different than when they are when you're 30. I'm not sure that a lot of emotions that -- that the birth parent goes through is also felt by the adoptee, and that might be guilt, shame, confusion, denial, among many others.

But as time goes on, the word comes to mind, acceptance. And I think both parties, as they age, accept what has happened in the past. And finally, in the end, it's all about understanding. And the understanding is that we all have an innate desire to know what our lineage is.

And just as all of you ran on with (inaudible), I did no different when I ran for office. And ladies and gentlemen, this is fair and right. Because what we need to understand is not only do birth parents have rights, but adoptees as well.

Thank you very much. I'll take any questions if there are any questions.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, Representative.

Are there any questions?

Representative Johnson has one for you.

REP. JOHNSON: I just want to thank you for coming to testify on this issue and whatever other information you can bring to us about the issue is certainly most appreciated.

REP. DIMINICO: I would be very happy to. And the

medical side is a very strong issue with myself as well. Thank you very much.

REP. JOHNSON: Very good. Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Sorry.

Representative Diminico, Representative Betts has a question. Sorry. Thank you, sir.

REP. BETTS: Thank you, Madame Chair, and thank you for your testimony.

I wonder if you could -- you said this was kind of a compromise. Language has been worked out. I wonder if you could describe briefly to the Committee what the -- what the resistance and the main issues are to opposing this?

REP. DIMINICO: Well, I -- one thing that I heard, which kind of surprised me and it would -- it would be to promote abortion is -- is one of the things that I heard.

And also -- which I -- I find very hard to believe. I don't -- really don't know what the statistics are as far as abortion, as far as if it's on the rise or - or a decrease.

But I -- I really think no, no that might be undecided issues, maybe with some religious organizations. Like I stated earlier, today, really, adoptions are for what's really in the best interest of the child. And a lot of unwanted pregnancies are looked at very, very differently.

Now, there's been a couple of movies that have been available to -- to watch and -- and it really kind of shows you how we've marched forward.

And the other issue is the concern of the birth parent, of perhaps the adopted child coming back and open up a can of worms. Or maybe the birth parent may have not -- may have been married, may have never let anybody know of her past, and it could cause all kinds of familial problems.

But that's why the -- the way it's written now, is that the -- the original birth parent has the right -- has the right not to -- to come -- to come forward to the adoptee. So that -- that's non-threatening.

So I -- I think it's kind of a win-win. I know one of the statistics is that the majority of -- of adoptees that are going back to find out who their birth parents are are really in their forties.

And -- and that's why I kind of alluded to the fact about it -- it's a process as we grow as human beings and as we mature as human beings, and that's really where the words acceptance and understanding come -- come to play.

That were different when we were 16 or 32 and -- and as -- as time goes on, we all understand it. And it really is about a birthright and it really is about finding out what your lineage is. It really is.

That's an innate, an innate, desire as a human being. And I think the time really has come where, as I finished my statement, that we really need to understand that the adoptees -- that the adoptees really have rights as well.

And if you talk maybe on a half a percent or a quarter percent of all the solicitations from -- from adoptees to birth parents, the denial is -- is really small. It's really like a half percent or a quarter percent.

So if the time has come for us to -- I know it's been before the Legislature before. The time has really come now. Now is the time. Let's -- let's look at our human side. Let's look at the -- when I -- when I was asked to speak, I really -- there's all kinds of data and statistics. And I basically said, I'm going to take this for the human approach.

Because this is what this really is. It's all about humanity and it's all about doing what's fair and right for the adoptee. They have rights as well.

Any more questions before I --

SENATOR GERRATANA: Yes. Yes, Representative Srinivasan has one for you.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Good morning, Representative. I'm glad you're here and thank you for your testimony.

As you said, we had taken a step last year, and this is, you know, and working on that step even more, which is the right thing to do. And when you look at how the landscape has changed and how the rights of the adoptee need to be respected as well.

If you could just briefly comment on that -- what you said about a quarter percent or half a percent of parents, to this day, of these people that apply and request the -- the information, they denied a group of people.

What happens to that process when the parent denies?

REP. DIMINICO: Well, I -- I have heard of the horror stories. I've heard those -- I -- I -- my assumption is that the matter just drops.

And -- and that's, again, I -- I haven't been directly involved. I'm only -- I only make that statement of that statistical data of what was -- it was presented to me.

But in my personal experience, and I -- I'm sure many in this room, I -- I really heard of no real horror stories, of -- of real repercussions and that kind of stuff.

There -- there's another side to this, I may imagine. It's kind of maybe extraneous to all of this, but I did see a lady that was an elderly lady who had brought up the issue that, as she aged, she came to terms with it and really said it's time for me to find my birth child.

Never been contacted and the issue became it was too late. The birth child had passed away. So it kind of goes all different ways.

But there's no threat here to any birth parent. They have the opportunity to have their name redacted. There's no secrets here. There's all kinds of websites for finding your -- your family tree.

I mean, as a matter of fact, my own town -- the town clerk provides a session on an annual basis to -- to provide everybody an opportunity in a learned session how to find out their family tree. But you, as a physician, certainly understand the importance of -- of the medical side.

Thirty years ago, 40 years ago, it -- there was never anything on your intake with your GP about -- about your medical history. Today, it's as important as your right hand.

I had a colonoscopy not too long ago and they

said to me, does it run in your family? No. Well, good. You don't have to come back in two years, you can come back in ten years.

So that's kind of important. And I had heard a story where -- outside when I was waiting to testify, that there is a woman, and I actually have it here. I probably should give -- have provided, too. I think will provide it to -- to the Committee.

And it's about a woman that -- who has breast cancer now and never was aware of her lineage, wasn't aware of her medical history. And perhaps if she had been cognizant of that, she may not be terminal. And -- and I think the letter is actually written by her daughter.

So this is another on the human side, too. I really think it's time to -- to really be open minded about it and -- and take a look on the rights of the adoptee as well as the -- the medical history of the adoptee.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, Representative. Thank you, Madame Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. Are there any more questions of Representative Diminico? If not, thank you so much for coming today and giving your testimony.

REP. DIMINICO: Thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you.

Next is a speaker on House Bill 5285, Barbara Bank, I believe.

BARBARA BUNK: Thank you, Senator Gerratana. My name is Dr. Barbara Bunk.

stopped all growth until it was vetoed. After it was vetoed I felt a little more confident about the future, so I hired a Connecticut based contractor to expand my spa and I hired a Connecticut website designing to redesign my website. I spent more money on marketing and medical supplies, I added a medical device and got another certification to provide that service safely.

This year I'm starting to advertise using local media. I'm currently poised for more growth which would include hiring one employee, but I'm hesitant to bring on another individual when I am currently in a precarious position myself having to rely on another individual, my collaborator.

The mandate for the collaborative agreement is a huge disincentive to open or expand a small business in Connecticut and I feel that to support this bill is also to support small business in Connecticut and I think that needs to be said.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you so much for coming and testifying. Are there any questions? No? Thank you. Have a good evening. Next is Carolyn Goodridge followed by Karen Caffrey.

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: Good evening, Senator Gerratana and members of the committee. We're going to do a little switch with another bill. I'm here to support Bill Number 5144, an act providing certain adopted adults -- adult adopted persons with access to parental health information and a copy of their original birth certificate. I am a social worker and public policy advocate for the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents --

SENATOR GERRATANA: Excuse me, please. Could you identify yourself for us for the record?

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: Oh, yes. Carolyn Goodridge.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, Carolyn.

SENATOR GERRATANA: I am a social worker and public policy advocate for the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents, a non-profit advocacy agency for foster adoptive parents and relative care givers. I'm also President of the Connecticut Council on Adoption which is a volunteer organization of professionals, probate judges and adoptive parents who monitor adoption practices in the state. I've been working in the adoption field for over 35 years and the Connecticut Council on Adoption has been trying to reopen access ever since it closed in 1975. I've personally been involved in working on this bill since 1993. It's a long hard road and we still are persistent with it.

In 1999, the judiciary committee asked the Connecticut law revision committee to study and report on this issue. Their report stated, quote, while on its face the sealed record's law appeared to give privacy assurance, any expectation of privacy is illusory. Even if an expectation of privacy were in fact created, such an expectation is not a vested right protected by the retro-active application of new statutes. They also recommended that the access be reopened and they suggested that rather than the adoptee having to prove to the probate judge good reason to open their birth certificate, the birth parents should present good reason why it should not.

So it hasn't always been the study that the birth parent was protected. In fact, back in the 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's, the birth parent was treated very badly. Most of these birth parents had no other choice than to give up their child because

there was no financial help, there was no other help for them.

My testimony is on file. I did want to mention thought that we met with the Department of Public Health many times over the years working on this bill and one of the things in your draft, this isn't the draft that we worked on, public health has told us that we cannot -- they cannot give out a certified copy of the original birth certificate --

SENATOR GERRATANA: Yes, I actually had a discussion with them, Carolyn. And they said that would have to be done by DCF.

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: Well, the certified copy, they said you can't give out a certified of the original if the person already has a certified copy of their amended. So, the word certified in this draft of the bill should say uncertified copy.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh, I see. Okay.

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: And that was one thing but when we presented the bill last year, we did have everything going to DCF and the bill still didn't pass. Our concern about that is that the adoptees will not go to both agencies, that they'll go get their birth certificate and then not go get the contact preference form. If we really want to respect those birth parents and be sure that their contact form is read by the adoptee, it's better to have it all collected in one place so it can be attached to the birth certificate.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. Are there any questions? Yes, Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Madame Chair for allowing

me to speak and ask a few questions. We had a conversation last year around this time, my first in the legislature about this issue. For the record, I am someone that was adopted so obviously I have a stake in this issue and I thank you for coming here today and applaud the effort that you have brought and actually the grass roots type of organization that's really been developing on this issue. I think it's great and I would just say on the record that this is a tough issue and this is an emotional issue. It's not a partisan issue; there are people with different sides that have different feelings about this.

And obviously, I'm supportive of it and reasonable minds can disagree and I would just say to my colleagues that I respect it if you're against this issue and there's rational policy, arguments that might say you're against it, but I would also ask my colleagues who are against it to be sensitive about this issue. I think some of my colleagues need to remember that.

That you coming here today to the legislature and asking for your original birth certificate, is a reasonable request. I think it should be granted as well, but that's a reasonable request. I think some of my colleagues I don't think appreciate that enough, on the record. I won't go into a long rant about my issue with this, but I'll just remind the committee that as someone who is adopted, I've had some interesting experiences with my own birth certificate.

I told the story last year that I had to go to Middletown town hall in 2007 to get my birth certificate for the Marine Corps, I was going in the Marine Corps for my security clearance. And when I went in there, they opened the book and there was my birth certificate and my original one stapled right under it with my identity. And

I actually tried to -- and the clerk got very upset and I don't blame her, but I found that strange. I also found it strange on my birth certificate the copy was on the front with my adoptive parents on their, their names were obviously were on there and for my birth date it was actually my adoption date. And I had to actually explain that to my Marine recruiter that this is -- when I gave him the copy I was not born in 1983, I was born in 1981.

So, you know, that was something that has always stuck with me and kind of bothered me. And I'll say on the record, it didn't preclude me from getting my security clearance, everything went fine, but that was strange. And I'm also somebody that stayed in touch with my biological mother's side of the family. So when it comes to my own identity and I go to the doctor and talk about family history, I can speak to some of it because I know that side of the family. But it is a strange experience if you're adopted, going to the doctor and saying, I don't know my medical history, it's just a blank. It's always awkward.

And it's something that sticks in the back of your mind, you would like to know for peace of mind. And I would like to know for my own medical history, especially with other issues, to have that identity. And when I look at this issue, it is a tough issue. It's a balancing issue. I think you have the rights of the state with this, and also the rights of the adopted individual. And I do think your identity is your own property and I do think you should have that not taken from you. And you should have that access. It is your identity, it's your property, it's your life and I find it bizarre that the State of Connecticut has access to this information, they have it, but you don't as an individual. And I do think when you reach the age of majority at the age of 18, you should have

that access.

And it is a tough subject, but I think it's the right thing. A lot of states are moving forward with this. Oregon did it in 2000, Rhode Island, Maine and other states and I think it's time for Connecticut to move forward with this as well. I don't think these adoption records should have been closed to begin with, in the 70's, it was a trend.

And now we're moving to a new era and Connecticut in recent history has really been kind of on the cusp of progressive social issues. So with that being said, I think it would fit the Connecticut model if we moved forward and opened these records for everyone. So I appreciate you coming here. It's a very emotional topic and I really appreciate the advocacy that Access Connecticut has done for this issue. Thank you, Madame Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you very much. Representative Alexander, you're telling me that your birth date was 1981 not 1984? Did I hear right?

REP. ALEXANDER: No, I was born May 9, 1981. My adoption occurred -- I was two years old, I was living with my biological grandparents at the time. I was adopted in 1983, in July. And my date on my birth certificate says that date I was adopted officially, not my May 9th.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh, my.

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: They have found that a lot of the birth certificates when they find their original ones, are wrong. Their amended birth certificates are wrong compared to their original birth certificates and that's why it is so important for many of us to --

SENATOR GERRATANA: Just too much.

REP. ALEXANDER: I mean, I was two years old. I remember the experience. I remember moving in with my parents. I remember the date in July, the actual date, but that was the date for my birth certificate -- I wasn't born in 1983, I was born in 1981. And it was weird explaining that to the recruiter that this is incorrect, I hope it doesn't mess up my security clearance.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh my goodness. Well, thank you very much for your testimony also. Are there any -- Senator Musto, did you have a question? Go right ahead.

SENATOR MUSTO: Thank you, Madame Chair. Good evening. Something I've been working on throughout my tenure with the legislature and I just wanted to see with the current bill, are there any changes you would like to see to it or is it good with you the way it is? That's my only question, Madame Chair. Thank you.

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: Well, the one that's presented, as I said, we like the idea of the documents all going to the same place. I know the Department of Health has concerns about that because they're afraid they don't have the adoption expertise, but I feel they could refer those questions to some adoption agency or someone else. Having those documents in two places, I just think is a mistake because it's not going to respect the birth parents the way we'd like it to be because the adoptee will go to vital records, get the birth certificate and leave. They may not ever go to DCF or wherever those documents are going to go.

And part of balancing this bill is to respect the birth parents wishes so that they can have their

no contact preference form if they want to, but also if they do that, that they fill out an updated health information form so we can get that health information. Because all these adoptees, most of them the birth parents were very young, either teenagers or young adults, their medical history at that point, they didn't even know to be able to give it out and that's all the adoptees ever got.

So it's so important to get that health information. But that's the only thing and then I noticed that certified and I said with all the meetings we've had with the Department of Public Health, that was one of the things they had mentioned and then they had mentioned having the documents go to DCF which we're still concerned about that.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. Are there any other -- Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, Madame Chair. Thank you for your testimony this evening. Just two questions for you, if the adoption occurred in another state and then the person moved to Connecticut, would they go through Connecticut to get their papers or would they go -- even when we pass this bill or would they have to go back to the state where the adoption occurred?

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: They do go to the state where they were born because that's where the birth certificate is filed. In fact we had someone testify with us last year who was born in Rhode Island and adopted in Connecticut and he just got his birth certificate when Rhode Island passed their bill last year or the year before, but he got it last year. So it depends -- you have to go to where your birth certificate originated, so it has to be the state where you were born. So anybody born here, maybe they weren't adopted

here, but their birth certificate would then be opened.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, thank you. And then the question is with a lot of international adoptions occurring now, for quite some time, where would those children over time, they would have to go back to their country where they originally came from to get their medical papers or would they --

CAROLYN GOODRIDGE: It's possible they would. Some children who come from foreign agencies, come with a birth certificate from that foreign country but then it is changed here and I believe there are a few that have been able, if this passes, would be able to get it here. But I think the majority probably would have to go back to their country.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madame Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. Are there any other questions? If not, thank you very much. Thanks for coming. Next is Karen Caffrey followed by Holly Harlow.

KAREN CAFFREY: Good evening. Do I just start?

SENATOR GERRATANA: Yes, please proceed. Just give your name.

KAREN CAFFREY: My name is Karen Caffrey. I thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am President of Access Connecticut. We're a grass roots group of adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents and adoptive professionals who support House Bill 5144. I'm also a psychotherapist. I counsel adult adoptees and birth parents and I'm an attorney. I had a very impassioned speech to give you tonight, but in lieu of that, I'm going to make that piece very short.

I was born and adopted in Connecticut when access was the law and as a result, I have my birth certificate, my original birth certificate. And I'm here because I want my right back and I want this right back for every living, breathing adoptee who was born in the State of Connecticut. Now I'd like to focus on just a few things that have been brought up previously.

First of all, I know the Department of Public Health has expressed some concerns in their testimony. The first one is they're concerned that this bill would require them to act outside the scope of their responsibilities because it's an adoption function. And I can understand their concern because I haven't done this before, but what I can tell you is there has been several other states that have done this including Oregon which has been doing this for about 13 years.

Earlier this fall I spoke with Carol Sanders, Oregon's vital records office of amendments. She's the amendments and certification manager and she felt quite certain, she's been doing this since Oregon passed the law, and she said this work is not beyond the scope of the skill or duties of their staff. We've had similar feedback by a gentleman by the name of Bill Bolton who is now the retired head of vital records office in New Hampshire. We really see this as a clerical function and apparently the other states do too.

The Department of Public Health had a concern about a fiscal impact. There is a fee that's charged for this. It's an increased fee over what normal birth certificates are charged. I think it's \$30. If that would be necessary to address their concerns, that would be fine and they had some concern about the wording of who an authorized applicant is and in our meetings with

them this fall, we did work that out and we can provide that language to the committee.

Secondly, I noticed that an OLR report was prepared for someone and there's one -- it's accurate as far as I can see -- but there's one thing that's missing that is very, very important substantively I think to this issue, and that is it has been the law in Connecticut for 26 years that if an adoptee, an adult adoptee searches for their birth parents and that birth parent is deceased, the adult adoptee is given that birth parent's identifying information. And that's at Connecticut General Statutes 45A-751B(e). Now the reason that it's substantively very important is that some of the people who have concerns about this bill are under the impression that whatever anonymity the birth parent enjoys at this point in time is perpetual. So they will go to the grave and take the secret with them and that is not the case and people who are professionals in this field and do searches are quite aware of this as is DCF.

So adult adoptees who are out searching their birth parent currently under the current law, can say no, I don't consent. But when, let's say that birth mother that passes, the adoptee is going to get that information and the adoptee if they chose will then contact whatever other relatives are there and those people are going to find out after that birth parent dies about the existence of the adoptee. I know you may have questions about that, but I wanted that piece of the law to be known.

Going through life without your medical history is like driving without your seatbelt in a car. Now some people do that and you can drive along and you can -- you'll arrive at your destination safely, but other people are going to get into a car accident and they're going to go through the

windshield face first. And that is what the current situation is for adoptees, who are going through life without their medical history. This bill will enable adoptees to be able to find their birth relatives in a way that is not satisfied by the current search system. I can tell you some of the problems with the search system. What I can tell you is the Karen Caffrey's of the world, we get our birth certificates, we have education, we have privilege, people like me get it.

I was on Channel eight last week, Mark Davis did a little piece and the phone rang, called me afterwards and a 70 year old woman somewhere in the state said I've been looking my whole life, I haven't been able to find my birth relatives and I want to know all my medical history for my children and my grandchildren. I said, well have you contacted the agency, she said I don't have enough money, I can't afford it. I said let me put you in touch with someone. A week later she had that information and she's going to be able to pass that information on to her children and to her grandchildren.

I have a wealth of information. I wish I could plug my brain into a computer and it could come out and into your brain. I'd be happy to answer any questions or other concerns.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Well, thank you. We'll use you as a resource. I think under Connecticut law though, you can get, as you just said, you can get medical information. Is it through an intermediary?

KAREN CAFFREY: How it works now, yes, how the system works now, we are an intermediary state so an adoptee can approach the adoption agency, pay a fee of \$300 or so depending on the agency and the law requires the agency to search for up to 10

hours. After that the agency can stop searching. I did use an agency by the way, I started searching in '78 right after --

SENATOR GERRATANA: What agency did you use?

KAREN CAFFREY: The Village for Children and Families.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh, okay.

KAREN CAFFREY: Who by the way gave my adopted parents my birth name when I was born because that was the law and that was okay. So I went at 18 and actually at the time I had to go through a probate court procedure because it used to be you had to do that before you could go into the agency and they assigned me a social worker. I'm 18, this is a social worker who by the way these are not trained private investigators. I was feeding her information, I brought a letter here. She would write -- I would say try this and she would write me back and she'd say well that didn't work, do you have any other ideas? Can you give me any further help? I'm 18. She looked for eight months and then I finally said I'm going to do this myself. Well within six weeks I actually found my birth family.

Delay is a problem. Many searches are unsuccessful and even if a search is successful and they find a birth parent, that's just a snapshot of medical history and time. Let's say we get our medical history and I get it today. One year from now something else could happen.

My father-in-law, my husband is not adopted, my father-in-law was discovered in his 70's to have AAA, an abdominal aortic aneurism. He had open heart surgery on this a couple of years ago. Immediately what you know there's a genetic component here, all male relatives, my husband and his brother went out and got the test to find

out that they had it. Well, if you had your medical history on some form from five years before that, the adoptee wouldn't know that. Medical history is a living, breathing, ongoing thing.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Well, I'm reassured, although it sounds like the process is not as smooth as perhaps we would like it to be, at least people can get medical records. I know however, there are concerns from people and we do have some testimony that are concerned that parents or the biological or natural parents, would be contacted and that perhaps they wouldn't want to be and I have not read thoroughly through the bill but do you want to comment on that?

KAREN CAFFREY: Sure. What this bill does, is what has been done in the other states, about six or eight of them that have enacted what are called access bills and the compromise that's been thought up to address this concern is called the contact preference form.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Okay. So this has it in there. I'm pretty familiar with that. Okay.

KAREN CAFFREY: It has it in there, yes. It's the contract preference form.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Very good. Thank you. Are there any other questions? Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Madame Chair and thank you Karen for your testimony. Real quick, I know the hour is late, can you briefly discuss the legislative history, and you're an attorney, on how this bill came to be law in the early 70's and how prior to that the birth certificates were open, everything was fine and then all of a sudden it shut down? And can you also talk to the fact of since what, 1983, the certificate

that you sign after you have the statement saying that the individual when they reach the age of majority can legally obtain information that could identify you? So if you could comment on those.

KAREN COFFREY: I'll try and be as brief as I can. Originally the whole dual birth certificate system was put in place in the 30's in this State because of the stigma of illegitimacy and the idea was to protect the adoptee from the stigma of being, I don't know if I can say this in the public, the "B" word, illegitimate and actually there was a practice at the time that even birth certificates would be stamped with that word, with the word illegitimate. So there was no thought of protecting the biological parents, the thought was to protect the child and to encourage adoptive parents to adopt because we had to convince them that they weren't adopting a defective person.

So from that time until the mid-70's, the adoptive parents of minors and adult adopted persons could have access to the original sealed birth certificate. The actual amendment that changed this access was a sort of a kamikaze amendment a post public hearing amendment at the last minute with a single legislator, there was some story -- the age of majority in the early 70's had been reduced from 21 to 18 and 18 year olds had searched -- it's really not clear looking at the legislative history. You think when you first read it that it was a birth parent that was upset, she was found, but when you read it a little more closely, it's not that clear. It might have been an adoptive parent that was not happy about it. In any event, that's when the law was changed. Then there was a great deal of study in the late 70's and the current intermediary system was put in place.

Since 1983, what representative Alexander was referring to, every voluntary termination of parental rights in this state, requires that biological parent to sign an affidavit, a very detailed affidavit that requires a very specific acknowledgement. And a clause in that affidavit says, I understand that when the child or youth reaches the age of 18, they may be given information that identifies me or other blood relatives. So what that is -- that's really, it's not a -- they're going to have the right to have it, but it's a notice provision. There's no -- in my mind -- there's no biological parent who is voluntarily terminating their parental rights in this state since 1983 who is not on notice that they could be found. And so anybody who's made any kind of representation contrary to that fact since 1983, has been in my view, misleading people.

REP. ALEXANDER: And my final question, this is starting to become more of a movement in many different states and New Jersey's looking into this, Pennsylvania's looking into this, Oregon's been doing this for 13 years, I think Kansas and Alaska never sealed their records. Can you explain how it's worked out, this modern movement in these states and if it's been successful?

KAREN CAFFREY: It's worked very well. Anytime you do something new, people have concerns and fears. In Oregon, they actually enacted this by referendum, they have a statewide referendum procedure that we don't have in Connecticut. It was challenged in the court. All the challenges failed on all sorts of grounds, but the parties that challenged it, it was an adoptive father who had five Jane Doe birth parents, his name was Fred Hunsinger and he has been quoted in the years since, saying there has been none of the horror stories that we anticipated. They all thought birth mothers are going to kill

themselves and families will break up and there will be divorce and raining cats and dogs, whatever. It hasn't happened. This legislation applied to adults and the amount of compliance, the amount of responsibility with people who have lived this is exemplary, it's stunning.

REP. ALEXANDER: I appreciate that and I appreciate your advocacy on it. It's a tough issue, an emotional issue. I really appreciate it. Thank you, Madame Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. Are there any other questions? Senator Musto.

SENATOR MUSTO: Thank you, Madame Chair. Just real briefly, the same question I had for the prior witness. Is the bill good as it stands or is there anything you would change about it? I know you testified a little bit about some of the issues in your testimony, but if you could sort of bullet whatever the changes might be?

KAREN CAFFREY: Yes. A couple of minor things. We actually would like the age to be age 18, just written at age 21. I agree that the adoptees -- we can't have one human being with two different certified birth certificates, so the original birth certificate in other states is given as an uncertified copy. Other than that, yes, the bill is okay. I do understand the concerns of the public health regarding the definition of authorized applicant, and we have some language that I believe they would agree to that would be fine and address their concerns.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. Representative Alexander you may want to start a working group on this.

REP. ALEXANDER: Absolutely, Madame Chair, absolutely.

SENATOR GERRATANA: All right. Thank you so much.
Thank you for coming today and giving testimony.
Next is Holly Harlow followed by Carol Goodyear.

HOLLY HARLOW: Good evening. Thank you to the committee for giving me this opportunity to speak in support of 5144. Despite everything we know about how important medical history is, personal connection, family connection, somehow this debate seems to always be framed around the confidential -- the promise of confidentiality to the birth parents. Well, I'm one of those moms and I'm really hoping that I can help change the dynamic of that conversation.

My child's adoption went through Catholic Family Services in the 1970's. I wasn't promised confidentiality and I don't believe I have the right to keep my identity from the human being that I created. And today adoptees of all ages 20, 30, 40, 50, they're going to go to an adoption agency and sit with a stranger who will have the file of the record of their life before they were adopted, the stranger will look through it, but the adoptee has no right to it.

So we have maternity home workers, we have adoption agency staff, social workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges, DCF and vital statistic's personnel -- how private actually were our adoptions? If all of these other individuals are trusted with my privacy and our privacy, then trust our adult children with our privacy. They are a part of us; they are not a part from us. Never underestimate the power of the child/mother bond even for those moms that are still so buried under the shame and the guilt that was heaped on us.

Our pregnancies were untimely, but our children weren't unwanted or unloved. Before our babies were born, we were constantly reminded of how

much an adoptive family could give them that we could not. Now, the only things we have to give them, the things only we can give them, like identity and heritage, family history, medical information -- are denied to them in the name of maintaining our privacy. Please don't place that burden in our arms. Please don't lay that pain at our feet. Please fulfill the real promise that was made to us and that was that our kids would have everything they need to live a happy, healthy life because without access, they don't. Please forward 5144 and please feel free to ask me questions, even though I'm emotional.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, Ms. Harlow. We do appreciate you coming and giving your testimony. I think it's very powerful and we appreciate it here in the committee to hear, particularly from you, so thank you very much. I don't know if anyone has any questions? No, but thank you and I was reading along also, so we have your written testimony. Next is Carol Goodyear followed by Noreen Bachteler.

CAROL GOODYEAR: Good evening. My name is Carol Goodyear, I'm adopted and I'm also the Vice President of Access Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to speak publicly on Raised Bill 5144. I was born in McCook Hospital in Connecticut on August 4, 1956 and placed into foster care upon release from the hospital. I was placed at the home of my adoptive parents 16 weeks later. My brother adopted -- my parents adopted my brother two years later. In our family, adoption was simply another way to create a family.

Some babies came to their families through adoption, some through vaginal birth, and some through cesarean section. That's just the way it was. My parents were always supportive of my interest to find my birth family, which after two

very expensive attempts by Catholic Family Services, they were unable to be found. My first search was in 1993 and my second paid search in 2003. It wasn't until a third contact with Catholic Family Services this past fall, that I was told my file actually contained the name of my birth father and here I am 21 years after my first paid search at 57 years old and Catholic Family Services never took the time to search for my birth father even though they knew his name.

For me, this bill is not about birth parents and reunions. It's about finding the medical history of my biological family. It is my history and it belongs to me. It includes the biological medical history of both of my birth parents, mother and my father. In June, 2013, after having had a mammogram, I asked the radiologist if I should have the test for the bracken gene, a gene if tested positive increases the likelihood of breast cancer of 87 percent and ovarian cancer to 50 percent. Women who test positive for this gene typically opt for a prophylactic double mastectomy.

I wanted the test because I have no medical history of my biological family, thus, no other way of know if I am at risk for the type of breast and ovarian cancer associated with this gene. With no available medical history of my biological family, the cost of this test to me is \$3,000. For the non-adoptive population in Connecticut with biological medical history, the cost of the test is zero. Three thousand dollars versus zero dollars because in Connecticut and as an adult, I cannot have the tools which include my original birth certificate that could increase the likelihood that I acquire medical history that would enable me to make informed and appropriate choices about my health for the first time in my life.

Adoptees are at risk and some are dying without the medical history that genetically belonged to them. With each passing day adoptees and their biological children play a game of beat the clock as health risks increase without this vital health history. It's happening and it's wrong. I urge you to support Raised Bill 5144. It's the right thing to do. Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you very much for bringing your testimony here to us today. Are there any questions? Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Madame Chair. Thank you for your testimony. I know I really appreciate it and I would just make a comment that it's been said that obviously you can try to pursue getting medical records of your biological family and kind of work around the system, but as somebody - - and now I'm in the legislature -- as somebody that has grown up in this experience, that doesn't come to your head. Most people don't realize you can pursue that. When I went to the Middletown town hall to get my birth certificate and I couldn't get my original, I thought that was it, there's no other option, that was the way I was going to live my life and that was it, it was un-negotiable, if you will. So, I think it is true that you can pursue avenues of approach to get medical information, but most adoptees I don't think realize that and they really think the door is shut fully. And I don't think we could really move forward and provide the medical history that people need that I would like as well, without opening up these birth certificates. Because practically speaking, most adoptees wouldn't realize that they could pursue it that way and it's very difficult too from what you've mentioned, very, very difficult and expensive to go that approach. So I think this is the most practical solution to the issue. So I thank you for your testimony. Thank you,

Madame Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you, sir. Next is Noreen Bachteler followed by Jerry Kristopher.

NOREEN BACHTELOR: Good evening, Co-Chair Senator Gerratana and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Noreen Bachteler and I serve as the current program chair of the Connecticut Counsel on Adoption. Since being here since the beginning of today's hearings, we've heard how important it is from other testimonies on other bills to increase and improve access to health care and also the importance of early screening on so many medical conditions.

That is why I am here today to ask for your support on Raised Bill 5144, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND PARENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION FOR ADOPTED PERSONS. I did copies of my testimony this morning at 10 a.m. and I hope that you have received it.

I strongly believe that all adult adoptees should have access to their original birth certificates and this bill should be both retroactive and prospective. This is a fundamental right that is allowed to all other members of our society and one that may even be taken for granted by the general public but not if you were born and adopted in Connecticut. It is the stated mission of the Connecticut Department of Public Health to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of our state. H.B. 5144 is a matter of removing discrimination and stigma still faced by adult persons who were born and adopted in Connecticut but are deprived by Connecticut law since such right was taken away as you've heard in 1975 to obtain their original birth certificates and thus, having access to their original identity and further acquiring critical

updated medical history of their biological family.

As you know, both federal and state public health agencies and professionals we heard today speak on other bills. The importance of medical and genetic data in the prevention, detection and treatment of thousands of inherited diseases and only for adult adopted persons but also for their children as well. It's also a cost saving measure, I mean, we're here about life saving but it's also fiscally cost saving to the State of Connecticut. If people have access to their medical information then they can obtain the screening to prevent them from going through long illnesses.

I've come to you today as retired from 34 years of social work career with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families when I retired in 2011 where my charge was to protect children from further abuse and neglect but I also was involved with several birth parents in both voluntary and involuntary termination of parental rights and with the placement of legally free children for adoption.

As a DCF social worker, I adhered to Connecticut law, did not make any promises, a total anonymity to any birth parent as that was not a provision of Connecticut law. The promise I made to a birth parent before me was to do our agency's very best in securing a proper and loving family for their child. Although you've heard that DCF 338, genetic parent medical information form is given to an adoptive family at the time of finalization, that information as is said before, is a snapshot. When that birth parent may be in their 20's, 30's and that child is a toddler. That information does not routinely get updated. As we know that the sharing of birth registry's that exist, have not been effective and they are

costly and they are not timely to the adult adoptees when they ask for that information.

You've also heard maybe another testimony online saying that adoption studies done by regarded institutes such as the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, found that the vast majority of birth parents, want contact, desire contact with the children that they surrendered, relinquished, 20, 30, 40 years ago. Only a small percentage and they've changed as they have grown and matured as society has accepted them, has accepted their children, that they do want contact and they do want to provide that medical information for their children.

I am very passionate about this because one of my major regrets from my DCF career was receiving a letter from -- a heartfelt letter from an adult adoptee who was searching for his birth mother and having to inform him that she had died a few years earlier at the age of 35. She was only 15 at the time of his birth and he was now in his early 20's and searching for her. A reunion never took place.

So, it is time for you, the legislator to do the right thing and vote for passage of H.B. 5144 to restore access for adult adoptees to their original birth certificates. Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you very much, Ms. Bachteler for giving your testimony today. Are there any questions? Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Madame Chair and thank you for your testimony. I just wanted to be clear, as a DCF social worker, I get the sense that you and others would have access to these original birth certificates?

NOREEN BACHTELER: We would request a copy from the

town that they were born in or from the state vial records.

REP. ALEXANDER: So you could get access to it, you could view it, you could use it but you couldn't disclose that information to the actual adoptee, am I right?

NOREEN BACHTELER: Correct.

REP. ALEXANDER: As an adoptee, I find that somewhat strange that the state has that identity and kind of over instead of the actual individual. And a final comment, the form you mentioned about medical history --

NOREEN BACHTELER: DCF 338.

REP. ALEXANDER: As an adoptee, I never got that information. So I never really -- I should probably ask my adoptive parent that but I don't have any of that information.

NOREEN BACHTELER: It's been around -- I started in 1977 and it was there then. So some of form of that, but it's a file on file with the probate court but it's a snapshot in time and it's not updated although birth parents can submit to the registry that you've heard about that DCF maintains, private agencies, they can submit it. But like you said, they don't know about that to do that and it's really only when the adult adoptee searches and can really make contact and if he's lucky, through an intermediary or whatever, that they can get that information.

REP. ALEXANDER: Because I didn't even know that information was out there practically speaking. And that's why I think the adoption records should be fully open with birth certificate because I didn't even know that was open to me. I think there's a lot of adoptees out there in

the State of Connecticut that are -- they don't know and they're going through life with this blind, not even knowing that and the only practical solution would be to open up those records and original birth certificates. So thank you and thank you, Madame Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you so much. Next to testify is -- oh, I'm sorry. Representative Srinivasan did you have a question? Oh, I'm so sorry. Ms. Bachteler, if you would return to your seat. Thank you so much.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you very much for your testimony this evening. Just for us to be informed and educated, when the birth mother gives up the child for adoption, 16, 18 at a very young age, obviously her medical history hardly exists if any or obviously -- hopefully everything is normal for her at that time. But then how do we -- you or -- keep track of what happens to her health over the years so that the medical information that you get at the time of adoption is current, that the birth mother has a history of breast cancer or has a history of this or a history of that, does the birth history -- I mean medically, does that ever change over years?

NOREEN BACHTELER: When you do the DCF 338 with a young person or anyone, there is a spot on it that you ask about, say the 16 year olds, her family history. But that 16 year old that gave birth, that DCF 338 is done at that time and if she chooses later on to send updated information back to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families or to Catholic Charities to update her situation, she may do that or she may not do that or she may not know to do that. So at that point in time, she is a healthy young person but she may face other medical issues that are unknown to the adult adoptee.

REP. SRINIVASAN: So that information as this young lady becomes in her 40's and 50's, will only be given to the child or to the adoptive child or young adult, if she as a mother has volunteered and kept the department up to date with her medical history?

NOREEN BACHTELER: And then of course if that adult goes back to the agency to request -- and the law does allow non identifying information but sometimes it may not be updated.

REP. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, thank you. Thank you, Madame Chair.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Okay. I think we're all set now. Thank you again. Good information. Okay. Let's see, we're going to go to Jerry Kristafer and then Gladys Ellis followed by Elena Schjavland and followed by Seja Jackson. Oh, well, welcome.

JERRY KRISTAFER: Good evening, Madame Chair, members of the committee -- I'm sorry?

SENATOR GERRATANA: You're a famous celebrity person here, so we're all atwitter.

JERRY KRISTAFER: No, I get that a lot, but that's not true. I'm an adult adoptee. My story although it is based in New Jersey where I was born and adopted, I've lived in Connecticut since 1977 so I consider myself a nutmegger than a New Jersey bite or whatever they are. My ex-wife and I were trying to have a child and after 13 years of trying and different medical procedures, I wound up in the office of Dr. Burt Berwin at Hartford Hospital. And I was answering a medical form with family history of diabetes or this or that and I'm going through what I had been told as a child because when you're adopted, you live a different life.

You become your mom and dad's child legally, but then they kind of get you to buy into your grandparent's history and this and that. When you're young you kind of do that, it's kind of fun. As you get to become an adult, you realize that this isn't really biologically accurate. So at that point I stopped him from taking all these notes and I told him, I'm adopted. And he literally took the form and put a giant X on it, meaning none of this matters. He says, you're adopted we don't know anything about you. And when he said that, I can't tell you how much physically hurt me to have a medical doctor just X out my life.

And at that time, I decided if I wasn't procreating, I was sure as heck going to find out where I came from and that's how I started my search. About a year later and thousands of dollars later and day trips to New Jersey going through church records and realty records and town records, I wound up at the agency that I was adopted through and I sat this close to a woman across the table who was willing to as an intermediary, set up a lunch with my mother. She said, I'll call your birth mother and see if she wants to meet you and I won't give you her name and she won't get your name and you can decide if you want to exchange names. And she's holding the folder like this. And I said, why don't you just give me the folder and I'll do that and she says to me -- would you like to guess the answer?

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh gosh, I can imagine.

JERRY KRISTAFER: You don't have the right to that information. As an American citizen, I don't have the right to that information? I understand I'm all for adoption. It's great. I understand the birth mother and the adoptive parents and a certain amount of secrecy or privacy -- not secrecy, but privacy. But when that child grows

up, it's a tax paying, voting adult who's on the radio and talks and people know. You don't tell me I don't have the right. You don't tell me I don't have the right to that information. Do all of you have your original birth certificates? Raise your hand if you have your original birth certificates? It's audience participation time. Ma'am, do you have your original birth certificate?

SENATOR GERRATANA: I have it with me.

JERRY KRISTAFER: No, I mean -- not with you, I mean do you have one? Yeah, oh okay.

SENATOR GERRATANA: I have my marriage certificate too.

JERRY KRISTAFER: We take for granted what we have. When you're an adult adoptee and you don't have anything and you're told that you don't have legal access to it, that's not right. I have a brief list I'd like to you when I went and did my search, I found out that I was the next to last of 13.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thirteen children, my goodness.

JERRY KRISTAFER: Next to last of 13. I have in this -- we're talking about public health, had I not found this out and I did this 30 years ago, half a lifetime ago, I'm now 60, I have a brother with Alzheimer's, a brother who has battled throat cancer, a brother who died of pancreatic cancer, a brother who died of lung cancer, a sister who died of gastrointestinal complications, a sister who died of ovarian cancer, a sister who died of stomach cancer, a sister who has severe cerebral palsy and an uncle who has both bladder cancer and stomach cancer. If I was not able to access my information, my biological medical history, I wouldn't know to even go for the screening that

was talked about. She doesn't have access to it because she doesn't have this information. Thank God I have this information and I can act on it. So I'm asking from a public health stand point, 5144 is crucial, it's critical because adult adoptees have the same rights as every other American resident of Connecticut to their natural biological medical history. And they also have the right, just the God given right, the unalienable right, to know where they came from and be proud of that. I'm Irish Hungarian by the way and proud of it. Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: That's quite a combination.

JERRY KRISTAFER: Well, that's a long story. You don't have time for that.

SENATOR GERRATANA: No, not here. This is family rated but thank you so much. And also I want to thank you for your advocacy with breast health too and breast cancer prevention. We really appreciate that very much.

JERRY KRISTAFER: Think of adult adoptees that don't have access to their birth certificates that have a complication like that. Many women in their 50's, 60's and 70's that don't know their biological history where that could have been checked up and prevented.

SENATOR GERRATANA: And it is, it's very, very important. Are there any questions?
Representative Sayers.

REP. SAYERS: Seeing as you asked me a question, I will tell you that you don't always have access to that medical information with your families. My mother was born in Ireland and I couldn't tell you what her family died of that died back there. My husband was born in Ireland and I couldn't tell you what his parents died of because they

don't always get that information. So there are many reasons for not having that information and being adopted is only one of those many reasons. So, I mean there are other considerations as well.

JERRY KRISTAFER: Right. May I respond to that, please?

SENATOR GERRATANA: Oh, yes, absolutely.

JERRY KRISTAFER: But you do know your mother's name and your husband knows his family's name, so at least you have a place to start which is what I did. But when you don't have a name and you don't know where to start, it complicates things.

REP. SAYERS: Right. And I'm not adopted, at least I don't think so. Obviously I'm not because I know I look just like mother.

JERRY KRISTAFER: I was 30 years old when I knocked on my mother's door. She knew who I was and she said it was like having a tumor removed because it was a big secret that she had been carrying around and I was just about 30 years old before I had ever looked at anyone that looked like me that I felt genetically connected to. I remember like it was yesterday.

REP. SAYERS: But I do agree with you that it is important to have as much of that medical information as possible.

JERRY KRISTAFER: Absolutely. Thank you.

SENATOR GERRATANA: Thank you. I don't think there are any other questions so thank you very much for coming and giving testimony today. We do appreciate it. Next is Gladys Ellis to be followed by Elena Schjavland and then Seja Jackson and then Valentine Iamartino. Here comes

who provide depression behavior therapy and APRN's who specialize in women, child and adolescent health.

I would be more productive, treat more patients and have more time to improve dementia care in the community if I didn't have this contract requirement. There are plenty of patients for all of us especially me considering one out of six people here are going to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in their lifetime. So I am essentially a care provider who takes care of dementia, cognitively impaired, ADD clients. Youngest is age 44, oldest is age 98 and without this contract requirement, I'm telling you that we could do much better dementia care.

REP. PHILLIP MILLER: Thank you for your testimony. Are there questions from the legislators? All right. Thank you for your testimony. We'll now hear from Saja Jackson if she's here, she left, okay. How about Valentine Iamartino? I hope I pronounced that not too bad. Okay. Thank you. On deck we'll start hearing from the first person for Senate Bill 126 and that will be Andy Hackman followed by Eric Brown if they're still here. But right now, Valentine, you have the floor.

VALENTINE IAMARTINO: Distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for having me here tonight. My name is Valentine Iamartino. I'm from Thompson, Connecticut. I'm here today to support Raised Bill 5144, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS FOR BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND PARENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION FOR ADOPTIVE PERSONS. As a member of the American Adoption Congress, in particular Access Connecticut, I do not present myself as your typical adoption triad member. I come to you not as a birth mother, adoptive mother or adoptee, but as a researcher with a strong passion for family history.

I'd like to tell you a little story why I believe family history is so important to adoptees. About 18 months ago as my youngest sister lay dying in the final days of her 11 year battle with breast cancer, she asked me to call her beloved coach and mentor to her death bed. She thought very highly of this man because he mentored her all throughout high school as a coach and a teacher when my mom became a single mom raising nine children.

The two, my sister and her coach, had become extremely close on and off the field, winning tournaments together and feeding of their profound competitiveness and victorious spirits. Coach became one of the most influential people in her life and it was obvious in her last days, that she felt the need to thank him before she passed. Little did I know, I too would play a part in this gift of thanks. As is the case with most big sisters, I wanted to see my little sister's wish fulfilled.

However because of circulated rumors, I was hesitant to do so. You see, coach had become ill over the past five years. It was well known amongst members of the community that he was suffering from a debilitating form of depression that had forced him into early retirement and prevented him from coaching. This driven, hard working, competitive man was reduced to a poorly functioning state unrecognizable to those who knew him. Additionally, he was not responding well to any forms of medication or treatment.

Much to my surprise, four days before my sister's passing, coach accepted my invitation honoring her wish. Upon arrival, I could see that the man who I knew and had as a teacher in the past was not the same man I had remembered. He appeared weak and withdrawn and certainly a victim of his affliction. After spending some time with my

sister in her dying moments, coach came out of the room visibly shaken.

As he collected himself for a moment, he said, Valentine, it pains me to see my star athlete in there dying. She was the epitome of health and athleticism. It makes me so sad to see her this way. He appeared heavily affected by what he saw and from the parting words they exchanged. Collecting himself and sitting quietly he then said, I hear that you were the one who recently helped Mr. so and so an adoptee out of Rhode Island find his birth family.

If you recall Rhode Island adoptees were granted the right to their original birth records in 2011. Catching me by surprise, I never knew coach was adopted. He said to me, will you help me find my family. He then elaborated saying, I only want to do this for medical purpose only. I need to know if the disease I have is something that I caused or something that is genetically passed down through my lineage. Wow, how sad is that I thought. Coach, a man that I knew for a long time knows nothing about who he is, neither his heritage nor his medical history? That really struck profoundly.

In all the years of doing my research, I never considered what it must have been like to not know who I was or where I came from. As a young girl I was given a taste of my heritage through my maternal line. I had two elderly great uncles who passed down all of their research and information to me throughout my life. When they passed away several years ago, I became the recipient of their research and ultimately the new keeper of the family history. To this day some 25 years later, I continue to add to that research. I see it as a work in progress, something never to be finished.

However, as valuable as my uncle's research was to me, the things that I had added over the past few years have taken on quite a different meaning. Considering my sister passed away of breast cancer at the age of 40 in 2012 and my younger brother passed away in 2001 from a rare form of appendix cancer at the age of 38. Losing two of my nine siblings at young ages has forced me to take on a keener interest in the medical side of my family history, well documenting all of its components via death certificates --

REP. PHILLIP MILLER: Could you please summarize?

VALENTINE IAMARTINO: -- family member medical records and interviews I've been able to analyze and archive these afflictions with my relatives. For an adoptee one could not be so lucky without knowing their familial origins. Adoptees do not have any real chance to develop or solidify their medical prevention programs, diagnosis, prognosis, treatments or anything that could be passed down from relatives. This does not seem right to me.

REP. PHILLIP MILLER: Could you please summarize?

VALENTINE IAMARTINO: Yes, I'm sorry. In regards to coach, just that piece of paper was the key thing to opening up the hope for him to finding out whom he was, where he came from and knowing that after I found and located every one of his family members, five on his father's side all suffered from the same form of depression.

As I convey this testimony, I cannot help but wonder about the multitude of people out there who are left completely unaware of their lineage and family medical history due to the inability of individuals to obtain their birth records. As I often say, to put our feet in other people's shoes, we need to get out of our own. Please

restore the right for adoptees to obtain their original birth records. It is their right, it is their human right.

REP. PHILLIP MILLER: Thank you for your testimony. Are there questions? Thank you very much. Okay, now we're going to go to Senate Bill 126 and our first is Andy Hackman followed by Eric Brown. Andy, welcome.

ANDY HACKMAN: Thank you, Representative Miller and members of the committee. My name is Andy Hackman and I'm here for the Toy Industry Association. I certainly admire everybody's stamina this evening and I'll keep my comments brief. We've provided written comments but we are here on behalf of the Toy Industry Association which is the national trade association representing manufacturers, distributors, importers and makers of toys here in the United States. The toy industry supports nearly 4,000 jobs here in the State of Connecticut, including companies like Lego, The Original Toy Company, Melissa and Doug and many others.

Connecticut is an important state for us and has a lot of innovation in the toy industry and we appreciate the state being supportive of the toy industry here in Connecticut. In terms of Senate Bill 126, we are here with some significant concerns. Safety is the number one priority of the toy industry. We are regulated by six different laws and standards that are mandatory at the federal level.

In particular I want to highlight for my testimony our ASTM toy safety standard. It was made mandatory in 2008 under the consumer product safety improvement act and it establishes a flexible way at the federal level where new science when it's recognized that there is a

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2014

Brian Moyer HB 5144

To whom it may concern,

My name is Brian Moyer and I am an adoptee. I am writing in support of HB5144, which would allow adult adoptees access to their personal information. Having the access to their original birth certificate would allow closure for many American Citizens whom have fought for years to find out whom they really are. In addition, passing the bill could also mean detecting hereditary illnesses which could keep families together. Pass HB 5144 and give adoptees what is rightfully theirs!

Brian Moyer

Sent from my iPhone