

SUPPORT HB 5428

- HB 5428 will allow an adult adoptee the ability to access his or her original birth certificate, something that a non-adopted person has and considers a basic human right.
- HB 5428 also includes provisions that respect the sensitivities of the few birthparents who wish to keep their identities private.
- HB 5428 is not about search and reunion. It is not about open records. It is simply about allowing an adult adoptee the ability to receive a non-certified copy of his or her original birth certificate.

Why do adoptees need information about their origins?

- The desire to know the facts of one's history is an attempt to understand the age-old questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Where do I come from?
- For adopted individuals, gaining information about their origins is not just a matter of curiosity, but a matter of gaining the raw materials needed to fill in the missing pieces in their lives and derive an integrated sense of self. Both adoption professionals and the larger society need to recognize this basic human need and right, and to facilitate access to needed information for adopted individuals.¹

Do birth parents support the release of original birth certificates to adult adoptees?

- **YES.** The overwhelming majority of birth parents support the release of their identifying information to the children they relinquished for adoption and desire to receive information about their surrendered children and/or initiate contact with them.
- A 1991 study found that a substantial majority of birth mothers (88.5 percent) supported adult adoptees' access to identifying information regarding their birth parents.²
- In a voluntary study conducted in 1989, the Maine Department of Human Resources Task Force on Adoption found that out of 130 birth parents surveyed, all 130 wished to be located by the child they had relinquished for adoption once he or she became an adult.³

Will access to the original birth certificates have a negative impact on an adopted person's relationship with his or her adoptive parents?

- **NO.** Birth information and contact with the birth family does not replace an adoptee's relationship with his or her adoptive parents, but rather leads to a more complete identity for the adoptee. Adopted adults who choose to search invariably make clear that their decision was not prompted by a rejection of their adoptive parents but by a desire to learn more about themselves. Not surprisingly, adoptive parents are supporting and assisting their adult children with their searches in growing numbers.⁴

¹ Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, New York, NY. Study released November 2009. "BEYOND CULTURE CAMP: PROMOTING HEALTHY IDENTITY FORMATION IN ADOPTION"

² Sachdev, P. (1991). Achieving openness in adoption: Some critical issues in policy formulation. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 61(2), 241-249.

³ Maine Department of Human Resources, Task Force on Adoption. (1989). *Adoption: A lifelong process*. Portland, ME:

⁴ Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute Report November 2007

How will the media campaign inform all concerned parties about the new law?

There will be a year **long robust public information** campaign which will include:

- Announcements in the license renewal forms sent to **the owners of 12 million Illinois vehicles**
- Notices enclosed with driver's license renewal applications through November 30, 2014
- Public Service Announcements
- Press releases to be distributed to local and national radio and television stations
- Announcements posted on the websites of all adoption agencies licensed in the state
- An informational website devoted exclusively to the new law
- Information distributed throughout Illinois to religious institutions, social welfare organizations, retirement homes, physicians' offices, and other entities capable of reaching individuals who may be impacted by this change in the law

What is the Birth Parent Preference Form?

- This form indicates the birth parent's preferences regarding contact and the release of his or her identifying information on the non-certified copy of the original birth certificate released to the adult adoptee who has requested it.
- The birth parent preference form protects the civil rights of a birth parent who does not want contact or does not want his or her identifying information released to the adult adoptee. This preference can be rescinded or amended at any time by filing a new Birth Parent Preference Form with the Registry.

HB 5428 is supported by a broad coalition of groups from across the state:

Adoption Advocates of America
Adoptive Families Today
Agudath Israel of America
American Adoption Congress
Chicago Area families For Adoption
Chicago Bar Association
Child Care Association of Illinois
Illinois Psychiatric Society
Jewish Federation of Chicago

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
Midwest Adoption Center
National Association of Social Workers
Search and Genealogy Services, Murphysboro, IL
Stars of David Adoption
The Baby Fold, Bloomington, IL
The Cradle Adoption Agency
Voices for Illinois Children

REMEMBER: Everyone, adopted and non-adopted alike, deserves the right to be a complete, fulfilled human being with a true history and true identity of self.