

News from

Adoption Reform Illinois

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Coalition Urges Unconditional Birth Certificate Access for All Adopted Adults In Illinois

Chicago – Adoption Reform Illinois (ARI), a coalition of adoption reform organizations and activists, sent an open letter to lawmakers opposing Illinois House Bill 4623 and suggesting wording for a new bill that would restore records access to all Illinois adopted adults.

The complex, multi-page HB 4623 offers some adopted adults the chance to access their original birth certificates, while banning access for others. ARI charges that HB 4623 turns the matter into a question of search and reunion instead of addressing the civil right of all persons, without exception, to access their records.

The bill also describes what rights the state will grant to Illinois residents in complex and convoluted language, to disguise the fact that it offers adult adoptees little in the way of civil rights. Adoption Reform Illinois proposes a simple alternative wording that anyone can understand:

“All adopted adults, upon reaching the age of majority and upon written request, shall be able to request and receive a copy of their original birth certificate without any restrictions or falsifications on the certificate, in a manner identical to that of all other non-adopted citizens of the state.”

“With the state budget in crisis, we urge our legislators to forgo this bill and its reinforcement of the Illinois Adoption Registry and Confidential Intermediary programs,” said Anita Walker Field, who founded Illinois Open, one of the organizations that formed the coalition in February of 2008.

“These programs are rarely successful,” said Triona Guidry, Illinois state coordinator for the Green Ribbon Campaign for Open Records. “By their own statistics, the registry has a match rate of less than 17 percent through March 2008. Moreover, they charge fees that many cannot afford.”

Both women have used the services of the state's confidential intermediary program with mixed results. Guidry, for example, discovered that the confidential intermediary had accidentally disclosed her name and address to her biological mother, thus negating the supposed confidential nature of the process. She, Field, and others who have used the program say there is no procedure for redress of grievances.

"The presumption that all adult adoptees want is contact is incorrect," said Field. "Some do, but all want the same thing any other person born in Illinois take for granted, an unaltered birth certificate."

ARI maintains that returning the right of Illinoisans to access their adoption-related records would not only acknowledge the rights of these adults but also eliminate the state support of these expensive and ineffective programs.

For more information contact Adoption Reform Illinois

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For More Information:

"For The Records: Restoring A Right To Adult Adoptees"
www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/2007_11_for_records.php

Adoption Reform Organizations Statement On Illinois HB 4623
www.73adoptee.com/2008%20open%20letter.pdf

Separating Hype From Fact: Why Adoption Reform Illinois Opposes HB 4623
www.73adoptee.com/hype-fact.pdf

Position Paper: Conditional Access Legislation and other Legislative Compromises
www.bastards.org/documents/conditional.html

Illinois Adoption Registry Statistics As Of March 2008
www.73adoptee.com/il-registry-stats-march2008.pdf, as originally posted at www.idph.state.il.us