

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 17, 2021 8:00 AM

Printed on: March 18, 2021 5:45 PM

COMMENTS FOR: HB 1386

Alison Macor

SELF

Austin, TX

As a close friend of several adult adoptees and a parent who pursued adoption before becoming pregnant myself, I think it's imperative that this bill be passed to allow equal access to original birth certificates for all adult adoptees.

Years ago I had the honor of being asked to help a close friend contact her birth parents after she did lengthy (and costly) research to identify and locate them. It was a powerful experience to be part of something so important and potentially life-changing—for everyone. I can't imagine such an emotional process being made more difficult by restricting or needlessly complicating the steps to obtain one's original birth certificate.

As the Committee on Public Health considers HB 1386, I'd like to request that all representatives vote YES in committee.

Sincerely,

Alison Macor

Matthew Wade

Self

Forney, TX

Adopted adults should have access to any and all records relating to their personal and medical history. These are legal documents and there is no reason that an adult should be restricted from them. From a medical standpoint, not having access to this information could pose a potential issue with treatments and screenings for illness or disease. On the personal side, any adults should be able to access and view all of their personal information, regardless of what that might be. It is their information, and they should have every right that any other adult would have.

Maria Watson

Support Texas Adoptee Rights (STAR) and self

Abilene, TX

I am a TX adoptee, placed in foster care at birth, and adopted at 3 1/2 years old. I did both Ancestry and 23&Me DNA tests and then petitioned the Department of Vital Statistics for my original birth certificate but was denied. I petitioned the district court to open my adoption file but was denied the first time. After the adoptee rights bill died in session in 2017, I wrote a letter to district court judge giving 4 reasons he could open my file, and after a month of waiting the judge opened my adoption file, giving me my birth mother's name. I applied for and received my original birth certificate 2 weeks later. Then in August 2018 I was connected through social media with a member of my birth mother's family IN ICELAND and was able to send them a copy of my OBC with my mother's signature to verify that I was the daughter she had placed for adoption. I then went to see my birth mother and 3 siblings twice before she passed away in August 2019. Though family reunification is not the main purpose or goal of the adoptee rights bill, it is not right that legal, tax-paying, voting ADULTS are treated differently under the law just because they were adopted as children. And if there is the possibility of finding members of their biological families, the state of Texas

should not hinder that. I am fully supportive of HB 1386 and ask members of this committee to grant fair and equal access to ALL people born in Texas to our own original birth certificates.

Jessica Spain
Texas Adoptee Rights
Cibolo, TX

I am a birthmother, and I think this bill is important for adoptees to allow them to find out where they came from, who they are, and their name give at birth. This bill will open up so many doors to help adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents. All adoptees should be allowed access to their original birth certificate. It is my hope that if this bill passes it will allow the adoptees who are missing a piece of their life, find that missing piece.
Please strongly consider what this will do for those who have gone their entire life not knowing where they came from.

Jessica Spain
Self - Paralegal
Cibolo, TX

Please strongly consider the rights of adoptees when reviewing this proposed bill. If this bill is signed, adoptees who have gone their entire lives without knowing where they came from, to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. This will allow adoptees to find out where they come from, and maybe even reconnect with their birthparents, or even siblings. I am a birthmom, and as a birthmother, I find this bill important to allow those children who were not in open adoptions to find out where they come from and more about their background and roots.
Everyone should have equal rights when it comes to knowing who they are and what name they were given at birth.

Denise Cole
Texas Adoptee Rights
Cedar Park, TX

Denise Cole
13010 Ridgeline Blvd. Unit 14102
Cedar Park, Texas 78613

March 17, 2021

To the Honorable Members of the State Affairs Committee;

This is my testimony in favor of HB1386

As an adoptee and a birth mother my perception may be different from other adoptees. I have been searching for over 20 years for my birth mother and many years for the child I placed. Both journeys have been daunting and discouraging.

As a birth mother I was never promised anonymity, that I would never be found or searched for. Who could make that promise in good faith? The legal documents I signed in 1984, when I relinquished my child, only took my rights away. There was nothing in them to protect me from someone else searching for me someday and that was fine. I do not need protection from the state of Texas for a choice I made willingly. I have the right to choose if I want to have a relationship with another adult, be it a blood relation or a complete stranger, even if they are the same person. That is my right as a human being who can exercise free will. As time passed I hoped the child I placed would be curious and look for me. And maybe they have, but the roadblocks of searching are intimidating and I would not blame them if they gave up.

Adoption registries are ineffective and I have not found any of them to be useful in my searching. I am registered with no less than 5 adoption registries and have never found any information concerning my adoption or that of the child I placed on any of them. The secrets are well hidden. Not having access to original birth certificates makes searching frustrating.

Sealed records in Texas infringes upon my free will and rights by making the decisions for me. Current law also leaves out an important part of the adoption triad; the adoptee. As an adoptee, being denied access to my own information is unjustified and irrational. The adoptee completes the triad and should have just as much of a right to personal and vital information as everyone else in our society.

Texas denies me my free will, as an adoptee and as a birth parent. We cannot legislate relationships. Everyone has the right to decline having a relationship with whomever they choose. The Texas Senate can allow free will in adoption cases or it can return to the early 20th century, the 1930's and keep everyone in the dark, hiding all the secrets that no one should be ashamed of.

Respectfully,

Denise Cole

Susan Morgan

Self , high school secretary

Lewisville, TX

Please vote YES for this bill. I am a Texas adoptee. 1972, Hope Cottage. The agency changed my paternal family info to read Protestant instead of Jewish. They chose to wipe out and change my heritage. we are humans, not secrets to be kept for others. When the state sealed access to our records they took away our basic human rights. Although the birth mother signs away her rights, it is actually the adoptee that has no rights. We have our entire identity and heritage wiped out. It is long overdue for Texas to give us access to OBC. thank you for all you are doing to make this happen. As an adoptee, I deserve the basic human right of access to the truth, MY truth. It is time, Texas!

Lauren Butcher

Self

Fate, TX

am a licensed Social Worker, LMSW, and have worked with adoptees and foster children for over 13 years. This bill is very important and allows adults who have been adopted access to their own records. They have a right to their own information and Texas should allow them that.

Adopted persons have a right to know their biological identity and history. Any other person has access to their records. This should not be denied to adopted people. I have worked with many people who suffer psychological damage and emotional distress due to not having their information and identity. As adults they should be able to access these records and decide for themselves. The fact that Texas makes it difficult or impossible to obtain these records that are their own medical and birth history is criminal. Imagine if you, yourself were denied and unable to obtain any information regarding your past or your creation. You were wiped clean as if the past did not exist. That you had no roots or heritage. That you had no conception. Adoptees are being denied that, and treated like they are less than everyone else. They are denied their constitutional rights. Please vote to pass this bill.

Davi Garz

Self

Houston, TX

As an adoptive mother of a 5 year old, I support this bill. It is crucial for adoptees to have access to their vital records. We need to revise the antiquated laws in Texas on this topic.

Esther Garza

Self

Pasadena, TX

Please allow adoptees equal access to original birth certificate in Texas.

Judy Case

Self

Kilgore, TX

All adults adopted should have access to their original birth records.

Connie Gray

Texas DNA and Adoptee Search Support

Driftwood, TX

This bill restores a right retroactively removed in the 1970s. This will provide privacy for those involved rather than dna matching distant cousins and everyone in the family knowing a person was placed for adoption. This will provide equality for all adoptees, no matter the year or county of birth. All educated and ethical agencies, legislators and those touched by adoption support this bill.

Cynthia Bowles

self

Ransom Canyon, TX

Please consider passing this bill.

Laura Summers

Texas Adoptee Rights

Dallas, TX

As a Texas resident and an adoptee from a private closed adoption, I want to thank you for the introduction of this bill and ask that it be passed. An accurate birth certificate is more than a piece of paper, it is a human right. When I originally requested to open my birth records 3 years ago (at 34 years of age) I was told I needed "permission" from my adopted parents and that a judge may or may not agree with my request unless I had a "good medical reason". This infantilization of adoptees' sense of agency and desire to know where we come from is unacceptable, and I am so grateful to the Texas House and member Harris for seeing it for what it is: a human rights' issue. I was lucky enough to find my birth family 2 years ago using a private DNA collection service. I happened to match with a maternal uncle. My birth family wanted to know me, I wanted to know them, and there should be no legal barriers in that process for any of us to navigate. The emotional ramifications of reunion are complex enough. One thing I

learned during my reunion process is biological connections are powerful. I instantly saw myself in my mother's face, my mannerisms made sense, I had similar interests and talents... all of this has made it possible to "know" myself on a level I would not have obtained had I not found my biological family. I am now pregnant with my first child - something I had no interest in until I had met them. I didn't understand the power and beauty of that connection, and now I do. Knowing the truth has opened up a new world of possibilities for me and my family. I ask that you do the same for all Texas adoptees. Thank you for your consideration in the passage of HB 1386.

Kristi Garrison

Self, oncology patient navigator

McKinney, TX

I am in support of this bill.

Richard Jordan

Self Retired

Leander, TX

Please vote for this bill. As an adoptee I know the pain that comes from not knowing my birth information. For sixty years I have struggled with this. Now, through DNA results and simple research I was able to discover who my birth parents are. Even though I have this information I still cannot get my original birth certificate. This is not fair and defies common sense. Please Vote for this bill. Thank you.

Jana Lockaby

Self, retired

Kaufman, TX

I am requesting your support, and vote, for HB1386 As an adoptee, with a hereditary eye disease, i cannot emphasize the importance of a family medical history. Had i not been able to gain access to my records, with the help of a social worker, working at the agency from which i was adopted, i would not have the answers doctors needed. Because i have those answers today, i now have hope of someday seeing again.

Because of the diagnosis of this hereditary eye disease, Retinitis Pigmentosa, which has left me, totally, blind, i have answers to many important questions. These answers have benefited me in many ways, helping me make life decisions. I knew my biological parents, and families, long before the changes to the laws, that has made me one of the few, Texas, adoptees, who could gain access to my original birth certificate. Because i knew the , exact, names of my birth parents, in 2009, i was able to get a noncertified copy of my original birth certificate.

I remember the day i received it in the mail. I did not "need" it. I wanted it. It answered more of the questions i had been asking for years. These questions my birth parents couldn't even answer. They did not know. Holding that piece of paper gave me such a feeling of completeness. I, for the first time in my life, felt normal, like everyone else. I felt real!

This information should have never been withheld from me. It is my right to know the information on my original birth certificate. It is all adoptees right to know, not just those of us diagnosed with hereditary diseases that drastically effect our lives. This is our truth, as adoptees. Please support, and vote in favor of HB1386, and stop the discrimination against Texas adult adoptees.

Thank you for your time, and service.

Sincerely,

Jana Lockaby

A Texas Adoptee

Julie Brownhill

self

Highland Village, TX

Please vote YES on HB1386. I am a adult adoptee.

This bill will grant access to original birth certificates for adults who have been adopted from our state. Passing this bill would treat adult adoptees as equal to the non-adopted persons, instead of discriminating against them. Under current law, adult adoptees are the only US citizens denied access to their original birth certificates. Having access to your original birth certificate is detrimental when needing to know your history, whether it be your family history or medical. Not having access is taking away adoptive individual's basic human rights; to know their native roots.

I am a adult adoptee reunited with my birthfamily for the last 21 years. In my case, I found out my birth mom had breast cancer. Now I know I need to be extra vigilant. I also found out dyslexia ran in my birthfamily. My son was in 3rd grade at the time having difficulty in school. I had wanted him to get tested for dyslexia because I thought maybe he had it but the school would not test him because it didn't run in the family, because I had no medical information. When I found out I do have family history of dyslexia the school would finally test him and he did have dyslexia. I was then able to get him the correct help.

Laws have been changing across the nation. From secrecy and shame to more openness which in turn has had positive effects and life long benefits. Not every adopted person has an interest in reunions but even just having the medical information has been so helpful to my family especially in raising my children. It would provide more privacy to all involved, currently adopted people are turning to the internet, social media and DNA testing to uncover information about their origin. We need our laws to catch up to what's happening in our culture. Adoption is everywhere, in everyones community.

I hope you support and vote YES on HB1386.

Thank you, Julie Brownhill

Beth Martinez

Self

Austin, TX

As a person who has never had to think about having access to my birth certificate, I have been astounded to learn that adoptees in Texas are denied this most basic document. Please pass this bill to align with what most states now provide. It's time for Texas to catch up to the rest of the country.

Bernadette Cashman

self

Richmond, TX

apdootee rights!!!

Cathy Tatom

self

Sweetwater, TX

As an Adult adoptee who has a daughter with severe MS it would be a very big help to have my original birth certificate to possible search for parents for health information. I have 2 grandchildren that could use this info as well.

I am in my 60s my adopted patents are dead and finding out my heritage would also be a blessing for me and answer many questions.

James Ballard

Self - retired

Austin, TX

I am in support of this bill. My sister was adopted by my parents when she was 4 years old. Years later after much difficulty she gained access to her birth records and discovered she had a brother who was disabled and institutionalized. She has since worked as an advocate for him to ensure he has appropriate care and has greatly improved his quality of life. Without access to her own birth records his life would be more difficult and his dependency on government assistance would be deeper and more costly. Opening birth records for adopted persons is a benefit to more than just the adoptee requesting them. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Janie Burnett

Self

Waco, TX

Please consider passing this bill. It's long over due . My children deserve to know their medical back ground. I'm 62 yrs. old. Recently tried to fill out a family medical history for a new Dr. And was unable to because I HAVE no medical history !!! I've had to deal with this my entire life. As I grow older it would be nice to have this information and know my health risks. I'm not trying to look for seek or destroy any ones life. Pass this bill . Thank you. Janie Burnett.

Joseph Garza

Self

Pasadena, TX

I support this bill that advocates for the rights of Texas adoptees.

Kathryn Thorkelson

Self

Austin, TX

Adoptees have a basic human right to their original birth records. As an adoptive parents I can attest, secrecy has not served my child nor my own interests. I would venture to say it does nothing in the interests of the bio family. Secrecy greatly impacts mental health outcomes in adoptees. It should not be a struggle to find out about your own personal biology.

Carrie Baggett

Self

Waco, TX

There are many reasons why I would like a chance to see my original birth certificate. One reason is to know my ancestors. Another reason is to find other siblings. And for medical reasons. I would like to bring closure to this part of my life and be able to answer some questions that I can't until I am able to see my original birth certificate. I am not only speaking as a adoptee but as a birth mother that would like my birth child to have to same opportunity to know more about themselves. I hope and pray that you all find it in your conscious to vote yes on HB1386. Thank you for your time.

Connie Cox

Self

Katy, TX

Please consider passing this bill we have tried to find our family and just can't afford to hire a private investor. We just want to know where we came from and our family medical history

Kimberly Sarantakes

self

Austin, TX

Thank you, Representative Harris, for HB 1386. As an adult adoptee from the Baby Scoop Era, being denied my Original Birth Certificate—a document containing MY information—was devastating.

I'm one of the 'lucky' ones; I found my maternal uncles, via DNA analysis, shortly after I applied for my OBC the first time. Since I was finally able to provide my late mother's name and information, I was able to get a copy of my OBC after I applied for it a second time. It looks nothing like the amended (falsified) birth certificate I'm required to use by the State of Texas, but at least it has all of the original, accurate information on it.

The past year has sent me into a tailspin of severe anxiety and depression. I found out a year ago that I was 33 years too late to ever know my mother...I will never get to look into her eyes, hear her voice, or feel her arms around me. I ache for my fellow 'cribmates' who still don't know anything about their bloodlines, family history, and medical information. It is decades past due that we ADULT adoptees have unrestricted access to our very first vital documents marking our entry into this life. It cannot heal the trauma of motherloss, but it can remove a bit of the sting caused by adoption.

Again, thank you for authoring this important bill. Your willingness to do the right thing by the adoptee community-at-large will not soon be forgotten.

Donna Rowe

Myself

Hewitt, TX

I am in favor of HB 1386 being passed. I am a birth mother, when I gave my child up for adoption records were not sealed. I was told that my child would be able to find me when he/she was grown and I have lived for that day for the past 50 years. I was not promised anonymity, there should be no secrets in adoption; secrets will come back to haunt you. I have loved my child since before he/she was born and I think of him/her daily. I wonder if he/she is ok, is he/she healthy, was he/she raised by a loving family. I feel as though someone has taken a knife and cut out a hole in my heart. I believe in Open Records and Truth in Adoption. The adult adoptee should have access to their birth records so they can have family medical history. In today's world, the adult adoptee is finding out who their birth parents are by using DNA testing as well as genealogy research. They post on Facebook as well as Twitter and other social platforms looking for their family connections.

Julie Moscarelli

Self/Nurse

Houston, TX

Thank you for bringing this important matter to the attention of non adopted voters. As an adoptee that has received my original

birth certificate, my hope is all that want to, be afforded the same blessing I was given. By DNA my biological parents were revealed and has been a healing experience for both my father and I. Sadly my biological Mom had passed and many other people of closed adoptions will be experiencing this as well until this changes.

We were all part of a social injustice that was founded as an answer for all parties. No research was done on the long term effects of that method. Open adoption that came a generation later birthed in truth rather than secrecy show such a different and positive outcome. Statistics that adoptees have a higher rate of suicide and birth mothers that want to be reunited should speak in support of the change that needs to be made.

I encourage all involved to educate yourself on these issues to see how changing this can benefit all Texans affected by adoption.

Melanie Barr

HB1386

Austin, TX

Adults should be treated as adults and be allowed to make decisions concerning their own adoptions.

Rebecca Hunt

Self- adoptive mother

Roanoke, TX

Hello. As an adoptive mother I must speak in support of adoptees' rights to their birth records. It is THEIR record. It is well-documented that adoptees struggle with identity for reasons like this. Everyone else gets their birth records except them. They have a right to know where they came from. Birth parents should not be able to keep this from them forever. It is not an adoptee's fault or choice to be adopted. They are already hurt so much by choices made without their consent. It's time for our great state to step up and grant them the rights they deserve. Dont give them another reason to hurt.

Lisa Rodriguez

Self

San Antonio, TX

Please vote YES for adoptee rights. Every person has a "right" to know where they came from. Thank you.

Kelley Hughes

Self

San Antonio, TX

As an adoptee, I feel this bill is a basic right. Adoptees are the only citizens that do not have current access to their Original Birth Certificates. Without access, adoptees are forced to seek out other means to find their true medical history and heritage. Things such as DNA testing which can end up letting out a secret that the birth parents didn't tell other relatives who have completed DNA tests themselves.

Emily Jackson

Self

Richardson, TX

Texas closed adoption laws are outdated. There is no reason that adult adoptees not have access to their own records. They were not part of the original contract and should not have to file lawsuits and then be at the discretion of the county judge. Not having this information further limits the possibility of obtaining a copy the original birth certificate since the exact mother's name used to file the original birth certificate must be submitted. Adult adoptees are real human beings, real citizens and should have the rights of other Texans.

Donna McGrath, Ms.

Self

Judson, TX

I, Donna McGrath, was in the Texas foster system approximately 5 years. I need my birth records to know of health problems in my blood line. I was adopted in 1965 but there are issues that can be avoided with knowing what my biological history is! Time to stop the secrets!

Sylvia Gosnell

Self , City Secretary

CARBON, TX

I think It is so important or adoptees to be able to find out where they came from. I was adopted in 1969. I have since found my birth mom. There are so many people who struggle to find out where they came from, who they look like. It is a piece of your heart that is always searching to know. It is also important for health reasons. Please consider passing this bill. It would mean so much to so many people.

Grant Brownhill

self

Highland Village, TX

Please vote YES on HB1386. This bill will grant restoration of access to original birth certificates for adoptees who were adopted from our state. Adopted people are the only people in the US whose identities are legally changed. Denying the adopted person access to the most basic, personal information is discrimination based solely on the circumstances surrounding their birth. Closed records maintain an environment of secrecy and shame. Current law does not provide privacy. Many adoptees are turning to social media and DNA testing. Not knowing family history could have detrimental effects on families.

Please vote YES on HB1386

Thomas Purcell

Self

Austin, TX

Please restore the right of adult Texas adoptees to aquire a copy of their own original birth certificate. Not sure why the State of Texas ever got into this position of interference with the personal lives of so many of it's citizens. This secrecy only makes it easier for bad actors to flourish unopposed.

We all have a desire and a right to know where we came from. Learning about our ancestors and understanding their struggles honors them and makes us all more appreciative of what we have.

Susannah Rolf

Self

Missouri City, TX

To the members of the Public Health Committee: I am writing as a Texas resident and a parent of two adopted children and a mental health professional. Following their birth, I made multiple attempts to obtain their original birth certificates and was denied every time. This basic and fundamental information about any human being should be accessible and legally obtainable. The public health considerations of adoption and its impact on adopted persons have long been ignored due to the infantilization of adoptees and the romanticized view of adoption. The realities are that adoptees are four times more likely to commit suicide than their non-adopted peers and have higher rates of mental illness due in part, to the erasure of their biological connections through measures like the denial of access to original birth certificates. I implore you to support this measure as a way of improving the quality of life for countless adopted persons living in or having been born in Texas. Sincerely, Susannah Rolf, LCSW

Sherrie Day

self

Dublin, TX

I am the birth mother of a child given up for adoption in 1987. He deserves the right to get his birth records unsealed. Ancestry Dna has proven that I am his biological birth mother. He wants his birth records which I cannot get for him. Only by passing this will he get what is searching for in that sealed file. The attorney and judge are now deceased who handled his adoption as are his adoptive parents who destroyed any paperwork they may have had. Thank you.

Clare Hudspeth

Self, Retired

Austin, TX

The Texas State Senate and House of Representatives will soon be taking up the question of providing original birth certificates to those who are 18 and older and were adopted as children. As an adoptive parent of a beloved daughter, I am very grateful that she was able to get accurate information about her birth parents. It took her a lot of time and effort and expense. All adoptees should have this information provided to them at age 18. They shouldn't have to go to the trouble my daughter did.

I firmly believe that all adult adoptees should have access to their original birth certificates. It makes a huge difference to these young people to "fill in the blanks" regarding their heritage. And it does no harm whatsoever to the adoptive family. It just gives us and our daughter more to love.

Keeping the birthparents' identity secret is just wrong. Thank you for anything you can do to support this position.

Sincerely,

Clare R. Hudspeth

David Brownhill

self

Highland Village, TX

Please vote YES on HB1386. This bill would allow adult adoptees access to their original birth certificate. Just like every US citizen. Medical information is so important. Society has learned secrets in adoption were not healthy, they were based on shame. In equal access states, there is no evidence of negative consequences. Abortion rates are lower or remain the same. This would lead to positive effects on the adoption process.

Please vote YES on HB1386.

Ann Hudspeth

Self. I am a Design Manager at Charles Schwab

Austin, TX

There are many issues coming up in this legislative session that I am passionate about, but the one that means the most to me is restoring access to original birth certificates for adult adoptees. I was reunited with my birth families at the age of 25, which is very lucky. If my adoptive parents hadn't had the willingness and funds to support my reunification efforts, I could be like many of my adopted friends: living with the mystery of not knowing who my blood relatives are, not knowing what diseases and inherited conditions to watch for, or finding my relatives after they had died.

In the years that I have known my birth families, I have learned a lot about myself. I recognize other people in my face, personality, and interests. I have proactively been tested at an early age for cancers that I would not have realized were a risk, and I had pre-cancerous conditions treated. And my genetic relationship with my birthfather was confirmed via Ancestry.com.

All adults deserve to know the most basic information about themselves for the benefit of their mental and physical health. I find it difficult to digest that crucial information about adoptee origins is locked away in public buildings. I hope you will support restoring this access for adult adoptees.

Edward Gunsalus

Self/retired

DALLAS, TX

Please support and vote for adoptees having equal access to their Original Birth Records in the state of Texas. As you can see on many TV shows and news stories these days, genetic relatives are reuniting through DNA databases such as Ancestry. That DNA search may involve many relatives, cousins, aunts and uncles. Equal access maintains privacy for the birth parents and the adoptee. Health history and ancestral history is also important to adoptees and their families. There are no DNA tests for most illnesses. I was an adoptee from another state many years ago and that state recently approved equal access. My adoptive parents were supportive of my search for my birth parents, my search took over 40 years. I was adopted in the mid 1950's. I never met my birth mom, she had passed away by the time I found her. I learned that she kept my birth certificate in her nightstand drawer for those 60 plus years since I was born. Studies have shown that 96% of birth parents want contact with their adult adoptees. Please vote to restore equal access to original birth records.

Chelsea Henderson

Self

Grapevine, TX

As an adopted adult who has found my birth family outside of the court system through my own detective work, please consider the implications of holding such information captive in a world that no longer benefits from secrecy. From hearing from countless adoptees and birth family members, we want to know and be known. This is a human rights issue. From medical history to

identity politics, to heritage and culture. It's past due to give Texans access to their original birth certificate. I have mine because of detective work I did on my own. My former name is Sarreana Leah. My birthmom cried tears of joy when I called her. She had been waiting 28 years but my records were sealed. We are real people with real names and faces and family. Please pass this for all generations. Thank you.

Jana Kaura

Self

Dripping Springs, TX

Please allow adult adoptees the right to their original birth certificate.

Mary Ann Hayley

self retired

Paradise, TX

My mother kept me so knew that side but dna testing when I was 72 years old told me who my father was. I finally knew where I fit. Knowing my heritage is a very peaceful feeling, something I was lacking.

I've helped adoptees and others with an unknown parent. Secrets are destructive and needs to end. We need to know about ourselves.

Everyone should have access to their original birth certificates.

Denee Barsalou

Self

Pflugerville, TX

I fully support equality for adopted Texans. They deserve the same sccess to their birth certificate as anyone else.

Deborah Bynum

Adoptee Rights

Cypress, TX

Needs to pass. Adopted adults have a right to their birth records. Stop discriminating .

Melissa Zawisza

Self

Arlington, TX

I ask for your support of this bill. You have the power to grant this right to many Texans. It is one piece in a person's journey & it's significant. Everyone deserves access to their birth records.

Thank you.

Erin Fry, Reverend

Self and Interfaith ministries

Dallas, TX

Please pass this bill. As a minister, attorney and an adoptee I understand how important it is for people to have access to their original birth records once they become an adult. This is an important issue for the mental and physical health of adoptees and affects thousands of Texans. Thank you for supporting this bill.

Laura Cottam Sajbel

Self

Austin, TX

This bill includes some thoughtful provisions. I write in support of its passage.

Shawn Brown

Self

Dallas, TX

Lets do this!

Margaret Hermes, Dr.

self

Austin, TX

As an adoptive mom, I feel strongly that adopted people should have easy access to their original birth certificate. Birth parent privacy should not be considered more important than an adoptee's right to know his or her biological origins.

Lawrence Page

Self - Attorney

Austin, TX

I was adopted at birth and have handled several adoptions as an attorney. It is a wonderful, selfless act by both the biological parents and the adoptive parents.

I love my adopted family, and I consider them my true family. My mother was the one who fed me, held me when I cried, diapered me, comforted me, and brought me underwear in high school when I decided to experiment going "commando" and forgot about changing into "short-shorts" in gym class. (It was the 80s, before shorts lengthened). My Dad taught me to swim, rode horses with me, taught me how to ride a bike, and drove me to and from and watched my hockey games growing up. I did go through periods where I felt alienated and distant. But that was not unique to me: it was just adolescence. I merely had the defense mechanism that I was adopted to use as a crutch that others did not. I am the son of my adopted parents, and nothing will ever change that.

When I had my own son and the roles reversed, that perspective only strengthened. I adore my biological son not because of biology, but because of the bond we developed since he was born.

That said, after my son was born, I did look up my birth records in Alabama. I did so to get health information that nobody

anticipated I would need in the 1966. I felt some trepidation contacting my biological mother, but she was thrilled when I found her. It filled a void in her life, not mine. It was quite cathartic for her to "apologize" for giving me up, and for her to explain that she did so for my benefit; and it was also cathartic for her to hear me tell her that I already understood. In many ways, we bonded immediately as kindred spirits: proving that the nature-nurture debate is not a binary dichotomy. There is immense value not only in my love and adoration for my adoptive parents, but also for my biological mother. As the catch-phrase in family law goes, there is no limit to the number of people who should be able to love a child: even after that child becomes an adult.

I could only access my original birth records because Alabama was one of the states that opened up biological records to allow adopted children to view their original birth certificates. It is the right thing to do for all involved. If they want to move on and forget the past, they have the right and option to do so. My biological father apparently was not receptive to connecting with me, and that is his right and his prerogative. My adoptive parents likewise told me long ago that they didn't want to know if I ever found my biological parents, and I respected their wish, as well. But the children and the biological parents should both have that option and that right; it should not be determined by government rule.

Creating secrecy is what perpetuates the myth that there should be shame involved in giving a child up for adoption. As with other open records laws, the best disinfectant for this shame is sunshine and open records.

Lawrence Page
Austin Tx

Kathleen Bradley
self - unemployed
Driftwood, TX

OBC's should be allowed to be able to be received without the guessing game, paying fees, paying registries, and ordering DNA tests. I was born with diabetes, adopted out, and spent 45 years looking for my bio parents to get my medical history. This should be something that all adoptees should be able to receive when they turn 18. DNA is opening up the door for adoptees and I think it would be much better to get the obc and actually contact the bio family direct vs go thru their entire family and stir up unwanted emotions from family members that were not aware of this secret, much less to out the birth mom or birth dad. So many states have opened up these records and Texas should follow and do the same thing. Adoption is bad enough, but when you spend \$10,000 to finding answers, it's insane! The world can get their obc's for \$10-20, but not adoptees. We are illegal aliens born in Texas. Please pass this bill!

Ashley McLain
Selt, enviro. Consulting
Austin, TX

Please pass this bill. As a person adopted in 1986, I have had a full and wonderful life but recognize that people in my situation have a right to receive their original birth certificate. Thank you! Ashletly

dora castillo
Self
San Antonio, TX

Yes - please pass bill

Catherine Coats wall

Open birth records

San Antonio, TX

I think this bill should be passed I want my Birth records to be open!

Stacie Cleland

Self

Austin, TX

As a birth mother, I am highly in support of allowing adoptees access to their original birth certificates. Not allowing access caused all sorts of issues for them, and it's not right or fair for that to be the case. This is a human rights issue, in my opinion, and I hope that adoptees will no longer be discriminated against after this legislative session, simply because their parents placed them for adoption.

Janet Kurasz

Self

Austin, TX

I support HB 1386 by Harris.

Sara Anderson, Ms.

Texas Adoptee Rights Working Group

McAllen, TX

I think that adoptees should be able to get their Original Birth Records for a small fee. I want my daughter to be able to do that. Just like her half-brothers are able to get copies of theirs if they need to.

Julie Stephens

Self/Volunteer Coordinator

Denton, TX

As a native Texan, adopted at birth, I am pleading that adoptees be given the same right as every other American to have access to their original birth certificate. While I've already found my birth family via DNA, it was too late for me to know my birth mother. She died before I found her of the same genetic illness that I now have. If I would have had access to my OBC when I first started searching, I would have gotten to know her. The rest of her family has embraced me. I am so fortunate to have found them and also that she notified my adoption agency of the potential of my illness. Still, having my OBC 20 years ago would have helped me get my medical history for my drs to better manage my illness. There never was a guarantee of privacy for my birth mother when she gave me up. With DNA technology now there is absolutely no reason to keep denying us our OBCs.

Charles Rodriguez

Texas

San Antonio, TX

Yes vote for HB 1386

Kyle Coker

Myself

Round Rock, TX

I'm in favor of this bill.

Terri Jane Ramirez

Myself

Hillsboro, TX

Thankyou to my Representative Cody Harris for sponsoring this bill for Adoptee Rights. Adoptees should not have to go to the lengths they have been to find answers to their story. Medical history, Ancestry, Ethnicity are taken for granted by people who are raised up in the families they are born to. No matter how much I Love, I Respect and I Admire My Family, the ones who loved and raised me, I cannot put on their medical histories, their physical traits, their Ancestry as if I were putting on a new coat. It was painfully apparent when I was a young adult and my cousins were going to be tested as family blood donors for our Aunt. My cousins never viewed me as their "adopted cousin" so even they thought nothing of the simple request that left me out that day, In fact when I decided to do a DNA test several years ago, those cousins were some of the first I told and I had their full support. Speaking of DNA testing...this was and is a game changer. I hear talk and argument of the Birth families "right to privacy". There is absolutely NOTHING private when you start down the path of DNA testing and playing with family trees on Ancestry. I took that path as it was the only one open to me. I looked at matches to my DNA and after many emails to people who did not know me, I found both my birth parents...but too late . I had to tell my story to so many people who then told it to people in their families until my place on a family tree limb was found. It can and is done everyday and there is nothing private about 3rd and 4th cousins trying to figure out where you fit. Or the pleas on Social Media, random messages sent to strangers on Facebook have "outed" many Birth Families. Would it not be more private for people to get the information for themselves from the very document that most people again...take for granted. It would leave out a lot of speculation and families all calling cousins, aunts, uncles wanting to know who this person is that contacted them with a DNA match or from a social media post. There is also those who say let the parties involved register with CAR, The Central Adoption Registry for the State. I was on every registry I could find. When I found my Birth Mothers family one of the first things I was told was that she had been looking for me, she was having her niece help her on the the internet, trying to figure out how to search for me. They had never heard of CAR...and her time ran out before I found them. She passed away before we could meet. This shouldn't have to happen. I was born in 1960, a time of secrets and lies. We should not have missed getting to see each other and her get to know I was OK. My search was never about being unhappy with being adopted, it was to have answers to questions no one could answer for me. I was very loved and wanted, I know that, but I shouldn't have had to lose both Momma's before I found the answers and could have shared it with them.

Kristen Katz, JD

Self, JD

Austin, TX

Granting equality to adopted persons in Texas is an important step in our state's ongoing march toward social justice for all. I see this bill as great progress and I urge it's adoption. Thank you.

Amy Chamberlain

Self

Austin, TX

I'm in support of this bill and believe that adoptees should be able to access their birth certificate.

Melanie Chung-Sherman

Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW, PLLC.

PLANO, TX

As a Texas adoptee, I fully support the passage of HB 1386. Full transparency and accessibility for all Texans, including adopted persons (the only Texas population who does not have equitable access to their OBCs), to their original birth certificate, is a fundamental human right. It is essential that this bill finally be passed as more and more adoptees and first families are reuniting through DNA registries. This will allow a streamlined process to access records in a portable and fair way for all involved. The days of "closed records" are not only antiquated but no longer apply to meet the needs of today.

Respectfully Submitted By,
Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW-S

krista ashby

Self

Austin, TX

HB 1386

I fully support this bill and believe it is a huge step forward in giving equal opportunity to all

Dawn Weisman

self

Austin, TX

I support adopted people having the right to access their own original birth record (OBC) at age 18

Lori Helmcamp

Self

Austin, TX

I am In support of this bill and hope it passes. This is a wonderful bill for adopted persons and should have full consideration for passage.

Linda Grant

Self

Abilene, TX

Please allow adopted persons to obtain birth records just like everyone else

Karen Kolohe

Self

Cedar Park, TX

Having access to original, unamended records pertaining to our birth is a basic human right that should be equally accessible for all adopted adults, just as they are for all non-adopted adults in TX. With various DNA services now available, anonymity is also essentially non-existent. Although my adoption was closed, I was able to locate my biological parents' marriage record on Ancestry.com and have been navigating reunion since 2008. Aside from the multiple complex layers of grief and loss that adoptees navigate as adults, not having unrestricted access poses potential various medical and legal ramifications, unfairly placing adoptees at risk to experience health and/or other complications into adulthood. Having access to our birth certificate is unequivocally a human rights issue, and I am asking that this right be restored to every single adopted adult in Texas. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kelly Inselmann

Self

Austin, TX

Please support this bill. Children have rights!

Deana Perkins

Self

Sachse, TX

Restoring access to original birth certificates for Texas adoptees is way past due. This is a right other US citizens enjoy. I am an adoptive mom. I KNOW how important this is. Please support it!!

Susan Schoenbaechler

self/sales

Georgetown, TX

Imagine being told that you have no legal right to your own birth certificate.... the factual record of your birth. If it is truly about birth parent privacy, providing adoptees with their own birth certificates is the only way to preserve some semblance of privacy for birth parents and for adoptees for that matter if that is what either party wants. As it is now with commercial DNA and social media, very often families and acquaintances find out "the secret" before the birth parent and in a very public way. Trying to hide behind sealed birth certificates is obsolete. I don't believe that either of those parties want the secrecy. Truth be told, the secrecy is what adoptive parents and adoption agencies want. Secrecy hides unethical behavior and human trafficking as has been historically well documented. Do the right thing.

Marla Smith

Texas Adoptee Rights

Elgin, TX

I support HB 1386.

Many people have spoken in support of this bill raising many salient points, personal, medical and legal.

I would like to speak to a more general topic: The right to decide, to choose, as an adult, to access my own history, medical and familial. Choice is the center of our civil rights, our democratic process and represents the respect we, as citizens, deserve and expect within our society.

It is my right and the right of all adult adoptees to choose whether or not we access our own medical or family history. The current system requires that adult adoptees navigate an arbitrary and arduous process to request and access sometimes inconsistent, inaccurate and incomplete information. This is not true for non-adopted Texans. This arduous process reinforces the idea that our past should be hidden, that we should be ashamed or embarrassed of our history, that we are second class citizens, and, most damaging, denies our civil right to access our own information.

While my own personal story is important to me and my family I am speaking in support of the right to choose for all adult adoptees. Whether the choice is yes or no is not ultimately important. It is that we, as adults, are able to make our own choice with confidence, dignity, and respect for ourselves and everyone involved. I support adult adoptee access to their Original Birth Certificate not because it gives adult adoptees additional rights. I support adult adoptee access to their Original Birth Certificate because it restores the rights that we, as adoptees, have been denied.

Currently, in Texas, as a 53 year old woman, I do not have the right to choose whether or not to access a basic document, my Original Birth Certificate. It is discriminatory and a denial of my civil rights a citizen. Restoring adult adoptee access to their Original Birth Certificate would restore the rights of all adult adoptees giving them the ability to make their own choices with respect and dignity to all people involved.

Lane Buckman

Self -- Customer Success

Grapevine, TX

People deserve to have their birth certificates. Please allow adoptees access to their original information.

Cynthia Bohnenblust

Self Retired

Eules, TX

I support HB 1386,

I placed my first child up for adoption in 1968 in Texas. I support the right of all Texas citizens to have access to their birth records and all available history. An adopted child should not have unequal access and should be able to lawfully and equally access their history and Original Birth Certificate.

David Teece

Self/Freelance Legal Writer

Dallas, TX

Adoptees right to their original birth certificate is fundamental, as well as vital to their physical and mental health and well being. I strongly urge the committee to approve the bill.

Stephanie Cole

Self - college professor

Fort Worth, TX

Please pass this bill. It has major import for adoptees learning their medical history, essential as we learn more about how critical genetic factors are in a host of illnesses and conditions, including Covid-19. In addition it forces no one (i.e. birth mothers) to confront anything about their pasts that they don't want to. Before you pass judgment on this bill listen to both sides and DO NOT simply take the word of its ill-informed opponents who in past incarnations have totally misrepresented it.

Christina Carew

Self-teacher

Austin, TX

I fully support adoptees having access to their original birth records.

Eve Wiley

Self

Dallas, TX

I fully support this bill- genetic matter matters!

Krista Jee, Esq

Self

Austin, TX

Having clerked in the dependency court and with adoption attorneys in law school and as a Children's Rights Fellow, I came to have an understanding of the importance of open information for adoptees. Adoption has become a more open topic - to the benefit of all involved. More importantly, this is critical information that is an individual right of the adoptee. Tracing of family history, particularly biological, medical and hereditary information is the right of the individual, and should be made available to adult adoptees.

Rebecca Aguilar

Self

Rockwall, TX

I support restoring access to original birth certificates for Texas born adoptees.

Cortney Jones

Myself

Austin, TX

Please pass the adoption rights legislation. It will help the adoption community out greatly

DawnMarie Scott

Adoption Knowledge Affiliates-AKA & STAR- Support Texas Adoptee Rights, Founding Member, Advisory Board

Austin, TX

As an Adoptive mother, I support HB1386 wholeheartedly.

Literally, my whole heart...my daughter, Ava Marie Margot Scott...is my reason for supporting this bill to restore the right of adopted people to access their own original birth record without discrimination due to adoption status. While we have a fully open, or disclosed adoption, with contact, my daughter's birth certificate was, nonetheless sealed at the time of her adoption and an amended one created that we all know is NOT an accurate medical record of her birth. She knows that the State of Texas maintains a lovely lie on paper and she knows exactly what is on the original. She knows that she will be treated differently under the law simply because we adopted her and that she has fewer rights than her non-adopted peers. We have been participating in advocacy for several years and she is only 3 years away from being able to vote, to make all other legal decisions for herself, but at that point she will be prevented from obtaining her OWN documentation by a system that perpetuates secrecy about the material facts of her birth. On behalf of all adopted people, I support the change in law to eliminate the discrimination against them with regard to the critical information of this vital record. People are not secrets, and should not be denied their own identity history, ancestry knowledge and self determination that is represented by the singular simple piece of paper which affords them their birthright---their birth certificate. This is an existential record that establishes one as an American citizen. It is a matter of not only equality but of a human right to know one's own identity, not as an adopted person, but as a person who was first BORN before other circumstances required a change in their care. Please vote in favor of HB1386 as filed without amendment, Secrecy and shame around birth does not belong to adopted people nor should it still be used to burden mothers who were separated from their children in a crisis. Supporting women with compassion and supporting adopted people with respect will be achieved when we restore this basic right to adults and eliminate the stigma that shadows so many in our community. Adult adoptees deserve equality under the law. Thank you for your consideration of this issue. PLEASE VOTE YES ON HB1386.

MEGAN RAPP

None

Austin, TX

We have a right to know where we came from!! Everything is stolen from us through adoption. At least allow this one small thing.

Amanda Bopp

Self

Georgetown, TX

I am in favor!

Alicia Daun

Self/Parent of Adopted Children

Greenville, TX

Adopted children deserve to know who their birth parents are and where they came from. Please pass this bill!!

Denise Villarreal, Mrs
Self. Screening Team Lead
San Antonio, TX

I vote yes to allow adoptees to have access to their original birth records

Amanda Hendrix
Self, medical writing manager
Manvel, TX

Restrictions against access to an adopted person's birth certificate violates their civil and human rights. By restricting the ability for adult adoptees to obtain their own records, the state of Texas denies them the opportunity to access potentially life-saving information about their medical and family histories. This bill is the right thing to do for adult adoptees in the state of Texas.

David Overton
Self
Rowlett, TX

Please allow adopted Texas residents access to the original birth certificates.

Katti Henderson
Self
New Braunfels, TX

Adoptees deserve access to THEIR personal documents. It is a clear violation of their rights to withhold them. This needs to change.

Karen Stumbough
Self
Katy, TX

Adult adoptees should have access to their OBC!
Seriously it's time to get rid of secrets in regards to an adoptee's identity. Let's come out of the dark ages in regards to adoption.

Paula Mele
Paula Mele Design
DALLAS, TX

Adoptees should have the right to access their original birth certificates.

LeSlie Simmons

Myself as a researcher and voter

Azle, TX

Helped my sister find her birth parents. 10 years of agony, until DNA came along. The current laws are antiquated and out of touch. Adults should have the CHOICE to access to their true parents/family members regardless of the reason for keeping it under lock and key. Thank you for your consideration. Hope this passes!

Arielle Declouette

Self/ internal network representative

Houston, TX

I am in support of this bill, this bill will help many people obtain their birth records.

Joellen Peters, Dr.

Support Texas Adoptee Rights (STAR)

AUSTIN, TX

Thank you Rep. Harris for introducing HB1386 and to the Public Health Committee. My name is Joellen M. Peters, PhD, and I am in support of HB1386. I am an adopted person, a clinical psychologist who works with adoptees and biological and adoptive families, board president of STAR, and past president of Adoption Knowledge Affiliates. Adopted in Ohio, I used gumshoe detective work in 1999 to learn about myself before I had access to my original birth certificate (OBC). I eventually gained access to my OBC when Ohio opened their records. Even though it was 20 years later, I got new information from my OBC. I am testifying today about the policy and human rights issues that are relevant to HB1386.

-All citizens should have equal access to the legal documents that the State of Texas considers proof of identity.

The state of Texas defines Vital records such as birth or death certificates as legal documents that are used to prove a person's identity. My birth certificate is proof of my identity and as such should be available to me as an adult. It is my record of my birth and thus belongs to me.

-Unlike non-adopted citizens Texas Adoptees face conditions and hurdles in order to gain access their OBC.

Currently in Texas, adult Adoptees have conditional access to their most vital birth information. ONLY adoptees who get a favorable ruling from a judge or who happen to know the names of their biological parents can get their OBCs. This leaves the large majority of adopted people with unequal access and is the essence of discrimination. Additionally, Texas law puts the burden of making decisions about "good cause" for opening records and matching names exactly, on human beings who cannot be expected to apply these laws equally. HB1386 is a remedy for such inequalities and clerical errors.

-As a result of unequal access to their OBC adult adoptees face difficulties obtaining related documents and information.

Adoptees unable to gain access can be affected by a wide range of negative consequences, including but not limited to: difficulty getting their own passport; shame about their information being held as a secret by the state of Texas; lack of accurate medical information for themselves, the parents who are raising them, and their own offspring; and negative consequences if they are victims of dishonesty.

-All Texans should share equal access to their history.

Texas continues to treat adopted adults as if they do not deserve or own their own history, they can't handle their own story, and sends a message that they are not on equal footing with other adults. It is a system created out of historic cultural shame. There is no shame in being adopted. There is no shame in asking to know who you are and where you came from. I ask you as representatives of over 900,000 adoptees in the state of Texas, to take this opportunity to correct an outdated inequality and restore OBC access to all adults in Texas.

Thank you,
Joellen Peters

Christopher Avila

Self

Dallas, TX

Everyone deserves to gain access to their birth information especially regarding access to healthcare information.

Candace Cooper, RDA

HB 1386 Harris

Leander, TX

In support of. Adoptees deserve to have birth records

Säge Gallaway

Self, adoptee

Lubbock, TX

I support this fully and completely. Sealed birth records are an injustice, and are cruel and archaic.

Tammy Nicholson

Self

San Antonio, TX

As a Texas adoptee and breast cancer survivor having access to my medical records and medical history is so important. Knowing my heritage and family history can change the course of treatment plans significantly.

Christina Arbogast, Caseworker with Masters in Social Work

Self

Commerce, TX

As someone who works closely with biological parents, adoptive parents, and adopted children, I feel it is vital for individuals who have been adopted to have access to their original birth certificate and records as adults. I understand the need to seal the records before children turn 18 as a protective measure for the child and adoptive family. However, by not providing access as an adult, individuals are being robbed of their right to know their true identity- good or bad, it is all relevant. In my experience, this causes unrest and can lead to many internal and emotional issues for the individual,

Passing this bill will enable adopted individuals to discover the missing pieces of their identity and provide an avenue to gain much needed closure.

Pass this bill and allow adoptees access to their birth certificate and records!! Everyone is entitled to their personal records.

Amy Byrd

Self

San Antonio, TX

Adult adoptees desire their original birth certificates. It's their journey in life let them know the beginning.

Elizabeth Davis-Pratt

Self

Seguin, TX

As a mother through the miracle of open adoption to two Texas-born children, I write to strongly urge the committee to support HB 1386. My children are American citizens and should not be denied their right to access their own original birth certificates simply because they were adopted. This is a civil rights issue. Please do not continue to deny my children and all other adoptees in Texas their right to know where they come from. Every person should have access to their own history. Adoption should not change this. Again, I respectfully urge you to ensure that HB1386 becomes law.

Renee Gomez

Abrazo

San Antonio, TX

I'm voting in favor for HB 1386

PATRICIA MARTINEZ DORNER, MA, LPC, DIRECTOR, ADOPTION COUNSELING AND SEARCH

self employed therapist

San Antonio, TX

Patricia Martínez Dorner, MA, LPC

210-341-2070

March 16, 2021

Testimony in FAVOR of HB 1386 Regarding the Release of the
Original Birth Certificate to Adopted Adults

My name is Patricia Martínez Dorner. I am the adoptive parent of adult daughters, ages 40 and 42. Equally important, I have been a mental health professional with an adoption focused private practice since January 1981 (40 years) and am considered a national expert in my field. In my professional capacity, I have worked with families at all stages of their adoption experience providing education, support and counseling.

I support the release of the original birth certificate as a basic civil right, based on my years of experience witnessing the importance of this document. which states critical information about one's birth, identity and origin. It embodies existential, psychological and emotional dimensions. No other population is denied this critical document.

I have worked for Lutheran Social Service (8 years) and during my private practice (1989- to current) contracted with Methodist Mission Home, Catholic Charities, Adoption Advocates, Adoption Affiliates, Abrazo Adoption Agency, the Texas state Post Adoption Program and the Casey Family Programs. I have also been a court appointed intermediary in Bexar County for more than 20 years and done extensive training around the country including the Arizona Supreme Court Confidential Intermediaries.

Having worked with the records of the above agencies and the court, I can, without exception, firmly state that there is no court or agency file that I have handled in these FORTY YEARS that in any way alludes to, or states, that lifelong anonymity and confidentiality are included or promised to birthparents or adoptive parents.

I have had the privilege of seeing the impact of putting an original birth certificates in the hands of adopted adults. It is a powerful and grounding experience, documenting the reality that their existence didn't begin with adoption. Instead, they hold a document verifying they were born like everyone else to their birthing parents. This is their TRUTH. It is time to remove legislative barriers

Additionally, it is important to say that birthparents were not promised anonymity nor do they want it as a lifetime sentence. Anonymity was thrust upon them because that was the practice of the day. Birth certificates were originally sealed in an effort to protect the fact that the child was born out of wedlock. Adoption records were not sealed to protect the privacy of birthparents. Birthparents had no idea the original birth certificate would remain unavailable to their children, even in their adulthood. In my experience, birthparents support the release of the original birth certificate. They are consistently amazed that the information has been withheld.

Thank you for your support of this important legislation.

Ashley Gordon Prater, Ms.

None

Irving, TX

I believe this should be passed, Texas adult adoptees deserve to have access to their original birth certificates. They deserve to know their origin, no person should be denied that right. They need to know their health and genetic history not only for them but their children and their grandchildren. Also, with widely available DNA testing more and more people are finding out their origin that way. This is a human rights issue, this is a healthcare issue, this is a healing issue.

Rena Perry

Self

Grand Prairie, TX

Please support this bill! I'm adopted and feel this is an important right all adoptees should have. Thank you!

Kristin Bell, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote in favor of this bill, allowing people who were adopted access to obtain their original birth records and birth certificate. This issue is important for the adopted person to have equal abilities to secure legal identity documents such as a passport and also ancestral background for medical reasons.

David Scott

Self

Austin, TX

I am an adoptive father and support the right of adoptees to learn about their birth parents

Karlee Gandy

Self

Adkins, TX

I believe as an adult you should have the choice to see who your real parents are

Lisa Johnston

Self - event management/entertainment

Stephenville, TX

As a birthmom, my voice has been muted by society & by the adoption of 2 of my now grown children. This bill allows my voice to be heard. The current laws treat 2 of my 3 adult children differently. The daughter I raised is 26, she has a passport, an original birth certificate & ALL of her first medical/legal records. The son I placed is 21 & the daughter I placed is 24, they DON'T have access to THEIR records. The passport process is a struggle for them due to their altered birth certificates. I find it quite prejudicial to treat them so different than their sister.

The country has changed, countless other states have adjusted their adult adoptee equality laws & the Texas laws should be adjusted, too! Why hasn't our amazing state followed suit? Current laws prevent an adult adoptee from accessing their first legal identification & medical record. Depending on the county they were born in, the options to request & process that access from the court varies greatly. The court in one county may rubber stamp the request, another court may require a large fee, counselling, or more. Why are we so unorganized & behind? Why do we treat adults as "partial" citizens by hindering their access to a passport? Why is it acceptable to treat 2 of my 3 adult children differently?

I was told last session by several Representatives & Senators that this was the "decent thing to do", but here I am again, for the 5th session in a row, begging that my adult adoptee children to be treated a FULL Texas citizens. Please take a moment to consider this bipartisan bill that creates equal rights for adult adoptees. We need your support!

Your 'yes' today rights a wrong that previous sessions have dropped the ball on. Your support is heard by every adult adoptee waiting for their rights to matter! Thank you for your decent & right action on this bill.

Sonya Maxwell

HB1386

Austin, TX

Hb1386

Samantha Kral

Self , Insurance Denial Specialist

Fort Worth, TX

I'm just a simple Adoptive Mother who waited 15 years for my daughter. 7 days of my daughters life she had a different name. A name her birth mother gave her and it also was part of her story. While we personally chose to change her name , we made her first name her middle name at the time of adoption. My daughter deserves to know and have a copy of her first birth certificate because it's more than just a legal document , it's part of her story. Millions of others adopted deserve to have access to their birth record in order to locate their family, research their heritage, and have access to their whole story. If my husband can have a birth certificate that misspelled his last name in a data entry error , then how much more should an adoptee have access to their own original birth certificate. I understand if the legal system needs to put certain rules regarding access to the original birth certificate of an adoptee , but at a legal age an adoptee shouldn't be denied something that everyone else has access too. Please consider for the sake of all the people searching for answers in their adoption records. Thank you.

Gracie Silvas

Self

Austin, TX

I support HB 1386. It's vital that everyone has access to their birth records. Not only for health reasons but as a civil right.

Amanda Barrows

Self/account manager

Carrollton, TX

Please pass HB1386. My son was adopted in 2015 and I would love for him to be able to access his original birth certificate when he gets older. My mother in law was adopted (Michigan) and will never know who her birth family is because he adoption records and original birth certificate are sealed. She has looked for years with no luck. Thank you.

Leslie Hinkle, Ms.

Self

Killeen, TX

As a 61 year old adoptee, the ability to have access to my original birth certificate is essential in leading to providing necessary access to possible medical information that could assist in determining my medical health in the near future. Having finally receiving my birth certificate after petitioning the court and finally getting it approved was monumental and made my life whole. Finally after 61 years I know what biological medical family history is now and how i can approach my health going forward. Without that important piece it would have left me not knowing anything about my biological imprint. This is critical to all adult adoptees. No longer when my doctor asks "do you have a family history of x"....now i can finally provide that answer instead of saying "I don't know, i was adopted at birth and that information is not available to me". Thank you for considering this very important legislation to so many adult adoptees who have been overlooked and void of basic rights of knowledge of human birth rights.

Karena McIlwain

Self nurse

Austin, TX

We have had the pleasure of adopting two children and are so thankful that the agency Abrazo promotes open adoption. We were not so familiar when we started the process but have been so blessed that our children will grow up with the benefits of knowing how loved they are and who their birth parents and family are. Adoption already comes with brokenness for the child but denying an adult adoptee the right to original birth certificate denies them the right to know a part of who they are. I urge all who read this to put yourselves in an adoptees shoes and think how it would feel to be denied the right to know your history and your roots. Thank you for reading. Please pass this Bill.

Brittain Sobey

self, program coordinator

Austin, TX

I support this bill

Cyndy Roark

self. permit agent

FARMERS BRANCH, TX

Members of the committee:

There is no valid reason for adoptees to be kept from their original birth certificates. My daughter was born almost 44 years ago. She found me through DNA testing. She is not an infant. She is a grown woman who doesn't need protecting by the State of Texas, her adoptive parents, or anyone else in relation to her adoption. Let's get rid of the archaic, outdated, and unnecessary laws. Please vote "do pass", yes, and affirm the human rights and birth rights of all adoptees born in the State of Texas.

Thank you.

Desiree Overree

None

Katy, TX

Dear Representative,

Most of us were born to two parents and know exactly who we are, where and when we were born, and who our parents are. Imagine not knowing this information, ever. HB 1386 is vital to adoptees for the simple reason of identity. Many adoptees struggle with this simple tenet of our foundation, "Who am I?" Please support and vote for HB 1386. Thank you very much for your service.

Kristen Henry

Self/stay at home parent

Katy, TX

Please support adoptees' rights to their own information. The era of secrecy in adoption must end. If adoption is truly for the child, we need to recognize that these children will grow up into adults who deserve to have the same rights as their peers. As an adoptive parent I had to scramble to get my daughter's original birth certificate before it was sealed so she wouldn't have to wait until she was 18 and then petition the court for this document. I hope someday to see more changes in the ways we document adoption, but today you have the chance to open doors for those who are desperate for access to their own information.

Kris Burdis

self - retail sales

LUBBOCK, TX

There are many Texas adoptees who were adopted through no choice of their own. Even though many of us were adopted by loving and supportive families, the State of Texas prevents us from accessing our heritage and medical history by denying us access to our original birth certificate.

Texas efforts over the years have fallen short. Texas has an adoption registry. It requires both the adoptee and one of the

biological parents to register. If the biological parents are not aware of the registry or if they passed away before the registry was established the adoptee has no hope of obtaining a match on the registry. Many adoptees cannot afford attorney fees to petition a court to unseal their records. That petition is still a roll of the dice depending upon the judge.

The State of Texas needs to recognize the advancement in at home DNA testing and genetic genealogy. I have heard organizations lobby against bills such as 1386 because Texas should respect the wishes of biological parents who wish to remain anonymous or 'chose' a closed adoption. In the 60's, 70's 80' almost all adoptions in Texas were closed. There as not an open adoption choice for a biological parent. With DNA testing and genetic genealogy, no one is anonymous! Ask the Golden State Killer or the numerous cold case detectives who have solved decades old cases with genetic genealogy. More than 95% of biological parents who placed children for adoption want the child they placed to be able to access their original birth certificate and heritage information.

For the 5% who wish to remain anonymous the State of Texas is putting their privacy at greater risk by forcing adoptees to resort to at home DNA Tests. When an adoptee takes a DNA test through Ancestry.com or 23&Me, relatives of the biological parent who have done DNA tests now see a new person that they are related to that they didn't know existed. Those relatives then figure out who the adoptees biological parent is. That could cause undue stress and burdens on a biological parent who wished to remain anonymous or did not want other family members to know that they placed a child for adoption.

If the State of Texas adopts HB1386, this would allow the adoptee to get their original birth certificate. The adoptee if they chose could reach out directly to the biological parent and it would just be between both of them instead of the biological parents family through Ancestry.com or 23&Me DNA testing.

While the State of Texas intentions may have been good at the time when they decided to deny adoptees access to their original birth certificate, times have changed. They best way to honor an adoptees wishes, and honor a biologicals parents wish for privacy is to pass HB1386.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Kris Burdis
Lubbock County

Erika Richie
Self
Missouri City, TX

As the mother of a child who was adopted in Texas, I support this bill.

Skylar Rolf
Self, Professor
MISSOURI CITY, TX

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee,
I am writing in strong support of Rep. Harris's HB1386 for adoptee access to their original birth certificate according to the parameters outlined in the bill. As an adoptive parent and Texas citizen, I believe that the information in the original birth certificate belongs to the person for whom it is issued. As such, it is imperative that adoptees are provided the same access to their original birth certificate as all other persons born in Texas. Please vote "yes" for HB 1386.

Thank you,
Skylar Rolf, PhD

Maraba Diraddo

Self

Austin, TX

I was adopted under duress at age 7 and lost access to my birth certificate - the original. I really wish I could have it! I want to see my original self!! Please pass HB 1386!!!

Stacey Owens

Self, Accountant

Houston, TX

Please vote yes for adoptee rights

Jason Kolohe

Self

Cedar Park, TX

I am a Texas resident married to an adoptee, and I believe that having unrestricted access to one's original birth certificate is a human right. Please vote "yes" in support of HB 1386, restoring access for all adopted adults in the State of Texas.

Katy Perkins, LCSW-S

Self, Psychotherapist in private practice

Richardson, TX

I am a Clinical Social Worker in private psychotherapy practice with an office in Texas. I'm licensed in TX, CO, IL, and FL and specialize in working with adult adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents in all of these states.

Through my work, I have met countless adoptees with heart wrenching stories from around the country who have fought ceaselessly for access to their own information. Adoptees who were told they weren't allowed to know where they came from, even though it might save their lives; or who do not desire reunion, but simply want their first medical record to understand their origins; birthparents who swear they were never promised a lifetime of anonymity; birthparents who were told they would be able to make connections with their children later in life, but when 'later' came, they found out otherwise; birthparents who were told they should never, under any circumstances, try to contact their children because "the past is best left in the past"; or who were told they should forget they ever gave birth; and many other variations. I have certainly also met adoptees who were not interested at this time in obtaining their birth certificate or finding their first families, but whom also believe they shouldn't be legally denied the right to do so.

So often, when I tell people that adult adoptees are unable to obtain their original birth certificate, I'm met with shock and amazement. To them it seems obvious that these adults should have access to their own information. Indeed, most people I talk to think it's something adoptees can already access easily.

In nearly 20 years working on this issue, I've met hundreds of adoptees and birth parents, and I'm sad to report some have died since then – without ever learning where they come from. It is so easy for non-adopted people to take this information for granted. It is difficult for non-adopted people to fathom what it must be like never to look in the face of someone who looks like you, or to be told you have no right to your critical family health history, or to know where you come from, even if you are a 90 year old man who fought in World War II, or a 75 year old woman who is receiving hospice care whose dying wish is to know

how she came in to the world. I have encountered these situations with clients in my own life.

Every argument I have ever encountered against passing similar legislation, while valid, is based on fear, misinformation or simple misunderstanding of how the current law works, as well as out-of-date notions about adoption; including the reasons OBCs were sealed, why people want them, why birth parents choose adoption, and why adoptive families stick together. We need not wonder what the impacts will be; we need only look around us. State after state continues to pass similar legislation, with no reports of negative outcomes. Let us set aside the outdated attitudes and norms which are no longer relevant, and which we now know to be damaging to human development

Sharon Cloninger

Self-retired Administrative Law Judge

Austin, TX

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

I am the biological grandmother of a 20-year-old who was adopted at birth. I did not know about her or meet her until she was 9 years old (through a series of happenstances), although her adoptive parents were open to my son being in their daughter's life if he contacted them. But he had no idea who they were or where his daughter was. While some may think the primary purpose of this bill would be to facilitate reunions, that is not the case.

What we are talking about here is both a civil right and a human right. Currently, Texas-born adoptees must either obtain a court order or know the names of their birth parents to access their original birth certificate. Non-adoptees need only submit an application and a \$10 fee to Vital Statistics. Passage of this bill would allow adoptees 18 and older to obtain their original birth certificates in the same manner as non-adoptees, a further step toward removing the "otherness," secrecy, and shame that can surround adoption.

Shouldn't all Texas citizens be afforded the civil right of being treated equally under the law? Shouldn't all Texas citizens enjoy the human right--as recognized by the United Nations' rights of the child--of knowing their origins? I would like to think that by July 2022 (as proposed in this bill) my granddaughter--if she so chose--could walk into a Vital Statistics office anywhere in this great State, pay her \$10 fee, and obtain an uncertified copy of her original birth certificate, the original record of her existence.

Thank you for your time.

Karen Stevens

Self

Austin, TX

This is an important bill. I fully support an adopted individual having full access to their original birth certificate.

Marci Purcell

Myself

Austin, TX

To the Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee,

I am writing to urge you to vote yes for HB 1386. As an adult adoptee I can tell you the current system in Texas is broken, inefficient, and humiliating to navigate. The reunion registry assumes adoptees are searching for reunion purposes, when that is often not the case. We need and want our documents for a myriad of reasons. Adoptees need and want to be treated equally under

the law. We also deserve consistency and ease of access to these documents, as is granted to non-adopted Texans to their vital record. These archaic laws only add to the trauma of the adoptee experience. As a child learning that my origin information was legally sealed to me was absolutely heartbreaking. Coincidentally, my birth mother was told I would be able to get my information when I turned 18. Neither of us benefited from the state's effort to legislate adult family relationships.

The current system adds further insult to injury by requiring adoptees to travel across Texas, for some, across the country. Requiring adopted people to go before a judge for a basic record places an undue burden on adoptees and for some folks this hurdle is insurmountable and they simply cannot gain access. This must change.

Petitioning the court of adoption is fraught with emotional and logistical complexities. Closed records sends adoptees the message that they should feel ashamed of wanting our genealogical and vital information contained on our OBC. Even though experts now agree these are completely normal, healthy feelings for adoptees and their offspring to have, the law does not signal that to us so we continue to feel shame around our natural need to know. Opponents need to remember that me learning my ethnicity or weight at birth cannot begin to replace the memories of my childhood and the love of my adoptive family. But also childhood memories do not erase my innate curiosity for my ethnic identity.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this pressing issue that impacts 800,000 Texans and their children.

Robert Steronko

self

Leander, TX

Letter in support of HB 1386:

This will express support for the above legislation to provide access to original birth certificates for adult adoptees. The basis for my support is one of personal experience. I am a birth parent of an adoptee. To my great fortune, my daughter found me by way of her resourcefulness and with the help of her adoptive parents. She was over 20 years of age by then, the effort having taken 2-1/2 years. This bill restores the rights to genealogical and medical information of those who find it lost to them through no fault of their own. It is through my daughter's intense interest and joy of discovery that I can attest to you of the importance of this birth right information.

I urge you to use your elected position as decision makers to enable and empower those Texas citizens that, by circumstances of being adoptees, need to be granted access to a basic yet significant legal document that the rest of us take for granted.

DeLeith Gossett

Self- Law Professor

Lubbock, TX

It is past time that adopted persons have access to their original birth certificates. The secrecy in adoption was born out of corrupt practices that exploited the poor for the benefit of wealthier families. Judges were bribed as children were taken from the families and birth certificates sealed to protect the parties to the exchange. Please refer to my law review article that details these practices: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2789112 (highlighting Georgia Tann's illicit baby business). A growing number of states now allow adopted persons access to their birth records; Texas should join their number.

jim canning

Self

Austin, TX

Please support this!!!!

Sharon Goulden

Self

San Antonio, TX

I am a victim of a closed adoption. I and my 963,000 cribmates deserve the right to access our own birth records just like every other human being. We have a right to our identity, our medical history and our genetic connections. We should not have to resort to costly methods like PI's or DNA testing to obtain the information that is the right of every human being.

DNA testing gave me my biological family 2 years ago, but it will never make up for the decades of struggling with medical doctors to get answers for my symptoms. I nearly died because I lacked an up to date, comprehensive medical history that would have helped my doctors diagnose my condition. I will never get back those years or the considerable amount of money I spent.

It's long past time we put aside the tactics of a draconian era where unwed mothers were shamed into secrecy. The policy of closed records has never been about the best interests of the adoptee. Rather, it's a way to perpetuate shame associated with our very existence.

Despite being unplanned, I still exist. I am still a human being with needs just like every other human being. Those needs include a full, open accounting of my birth just as every kept child possesses.

Shana Sheetan, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

I support adoptees' Rights to retain their birth record

Rosanna Lenzi

Self/teacher

Leander, TX

As an adoptee I'm in support of HB 1386. In order for me to receive my original birth certificate, I need to hand over the original court order that unsealed my adoption records. I do not feel it is necessary to do this. They did not accept my copy. I was adopted in 1961.

Arthur Simon

self, artist

Austin, TX

I support this bill because we should give adopted Texans the same equal right to their own birth certificate as the rest of us.

Suzanne Teshera

Self, tour guide

Driftwood, TX

Not allowing adult adoptees access to their original birth certificates is treating them as a second class citizen and is wrong.

BRIAN PETERS

Brian Peters

Austin, TX 78704, TX

I'm writing in support of House Bill 1386. I believe adopted persons are not treated equally as non-adopted persons in Texas. This is a civil rights issue, not an adoption issue. Please keep that in mind. To not allow access to one's original birth certificate is unconstitutional.

Thank you for your time.

Beverly Kiser

Self

Austin, TX

I am a fourth generation Texan on both sides of my family. The only way I know this amazing fact is because I searched and found my birth families the old fashioned way. Please vote yes so that we Texas adoptees have the same rights as all our other Texans to obtain our original, factual and unaltered birth certificates.

David Albert, Dr.

Myself

Austin, TX

This is a civil rights issue. Adoptees have a right to know where, when to whom they were born. They should have a right to their own identity if they want to know about it. Everyone should have a right to know who they are, who their parents are, be able to determine their ethnicity, be able to track down their genetic history and possible vulnerability to genetic disorders. Adoptees deserve the right to be able to try to find their birth parents, who may decide they don't want to meet with them, but they deserve the right to be able to track them down.

Adam McKinney, Director of Government and Strategic Relations

Buckner Children and Family Services

Dallas, TX

Buckner Children and Family Services, Inc. has been serving adoptive families and adult adopted persons for generations. Our organization has been focused on evidenced-based, best practices that strengthen families and support children. Since the mid-1990's, Buckner has been a proponent of open adoption, in which full disclosure of birth parents', adopted persons' and adoptive parents' identities are shared. Buckner believes open adoption is a foundational and instrumental step in infant and child placement.

Buckner's Post Adoption Department currently serves adopted persons and birth parents who wish to reconnect through a mutual registry. Buckner also receives court orders within Dallas County for access to one's original file. Buckner welcomes these court orders and serves adopted persons quickly and efficiently. However, in order to complete this process, an adult adopted person must demonstrate good cause for why they should be entitled to their birth records, which may or may not include an original birth certificate. This can vary from court to court, creating an uneven distribution of information. No person should have their right to seek out their birth certificate be weighed in judgment by a court of law.

We ask that the Texas Legislation consider house bills that restore access to original birth certificates for Texas born adult adoptees. Legislation that focuses on providing original birth certificates to individuals on or after their 18th birthday who were placed for adoption as a child has the support of Buckner Children and Family Services, Inc. Buckner fully supports the right of all people to have access to basic, unique information about themselves and their origins. This would ensure that adopted persons have the opportunity to know the identity of their birth parents if they so choose, thereby allowing them to develop adult relationships with their family of origin.

Please do not hesitate to contact at amckinney@buckner.org or (281) 455-5029 if our organization can provide more information

Lana Addington
Adoption Network of Texas
Millsap, TX

Adult adoptees are just that, adults. They deserve to know their heritage and to have access to their documentation of their birth.

I right now am caring for my elderly birth mother and yet I have no documentation to show she's any relation to me.

Where is there documentation that anonymity was promised? An adoption agency or the state can give out non identifying information that includes the mother's doctor records from during her pregnancy but can't give adoptees an original birth certificate. This makes no sense.

Any adoptee can take a DNA test and find out who they are related to. This is just a piece of paper at this point.

Thank you for taking the time to look at this and making the right decision.

Dinorah Boykin
Self - Manager
San Antonio, TX

Please allow people to have access to their birth certificates. It is critical for them instead of trying to search for biological family through private means. My son is an adoptee and I want to ensure he has this right just like any other person in Texas.

Noel Johnson, Chief Deputy
STAR Support Texas Adoptee Rights
Austin, TX

I am an adult adoptee in Texas. Having access to your original birth certificate is a basic civil/human right. What greater right is there than to know who you are or where you came from? It is also your original medical record. Not having access to this document can cause issues getting a passport, drivers license, etc. Non Adoptees have access to this information so why are adoptees discriminated against? This bill is for adults over the age of 18. Let me say that again...Adults. I am a skilled police investigator with extensive political connections in the State of Texas. I had all the information I needed to get my original birth certificate (birth book number, biological mothers name) and was still denied by the State two times before a third appeal with birth mothers maiden name forced vital statistics to release my obc. I discovered there was cancer in my family line. If someone with my investigative skills and political connections faced great difficulty gaining this information, how difficult must it be for that average adult adoptee in Texas to get this information? Please pass this bill and provide these individuals this deserved basin human right.

Ann-Marie Kennedy

Self, an adoptive mom

Yes, TX

Adopted persons are full human beings who should have the same rights as other human beings. They deserve their OBC and to be treated as adults. They are not children and shouldn't be treated as children when they are adults. Can you imagine being a grown adult and needing the permission of your adoptive parent to get your OBC?

Jennifer Paghi, LMSW

Self

Dallas, TX

I am in favor of this.

M. Wayne Jennings

self - retired educator

San Marcos, TX

Our family has been "found" by several members who were adopted out. In Oregon it was a simple matter but here in Texas one cousin had to wait 25 years before a judge would release his birth certificate. So many years wasted. Please support adults being able to get their original birth certificates. Adoptees should have the same rights as all other Texans.

Katie Tillery

Self, an adopted Texan.

CADDO MILLS, TX

I am an adopted person. I want to ask for your consideration in passing this bill and allowing all Texas adoptees to the right to access the factual document of their birth. As many know, when you are adopted your original birth certificate is updated to reflect your adoptive parents information. The interesting thing about this is that it then becomes a fraudulent document. My birth certificate states that my adopted mother gave birth to me in a hospital she has never stepped foot in. On the date of birth she was actually not even in the state. But this government issued document says otherwise. My objection is not just about the information on the amended certificate being false but mostly about the right that should be afforded to adoptees that are afforded to every other individual who was born... the right to have access to the original document. The arguments against this are that the birth mother, upon relinquishing her child for adoption, was offered an assurance of lifetime anonymity. This is a false assumption. Birth mothers never signed paperwork to this effect. They were made to feel ashamed and that they needed to hide their identity because of falling short of society standards of the time. They were pressured into remaining silent. The push for secrecy and anonymity actually comes from the adoption side things. Adoptive families commonly have the fear of birth families coming back for the child they placed for adoption. This practice also stemmed from the Georgia Tann era of adoption. If you've never heard of this woman I suggest reading up on her practices. She pushed for sealing adoption records and birth certificates to cover for the crimes that she was committing behind the scenes. Even after her atrocities were discovered, these practices she had a hand in implementing stayed in place. In my opinion it's similar to the idea of Hitler being gone but people continuing on with his mindset! It's been said that this day and age adoptees don't need birth certificates when we can find the answers we seek by posting to social media or by doing DNA tests through such companies as Ancestry and 23 and Me. Although this is factual, it goes against the mainstream argument of respecting the privacy of the birth mothers. Posting on social media risks the possibility of others seeing it that would recognize the information and realize who the birth mother is, whether she wanted to be found out or not. This is the same effect with DNA. I myself have taken the Ancestry DNA test and so far have many aunts, uncles, cousins,

and 1 grandparent that have matched with me. The majority of these people did not know of my existence. 3000 characters is not enough to write out a full argument but it's a start which is what I hope you will give this bill....a start. Let the bill proceed and the discussions continue. As the base of this argument is adoptees asking for the legal right afford to everyone else. Did you have to petition a court for yours?

Christy Lange
HB1386Harris
Georgetown, TX

I am a birth mom of a lovely daughter who is adopted and I am in favor of this bill .all parents and children of adoptees really need access to this. Thank you Christy Lange

Jennie Chase-Reeves
My deceased grandfather who was adopted
Dallas, TX

My Grandfather, who was born in Dallas in 1937, tried a couple times in his lifetime to get ANY information regarding his original birth certificate and adoption with no success. He suffered for years with depression over the undying desire to find his biological mother.

Through DNA testing, I was able to identify his biological parents in 2017. TEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH! I found out through family members that his mother, who lived less than 20 miles from him for 25+ years, suffered from depression her whole adult life, missing her first born! She looked for him until her dying day. If only he could have gotten access to his original birth certificate, they might have met in this world.

My grandfather would be 84 this September and we still have not been able to receive a copy of his original birth certificate even though we know what is on it. They send back that it was a closed adoption, even though it's over 75 years AND we aren't asking for adoption info. JUST A COPY OF HIS ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE!

Please pass this Bill to ensure other Adult Adoptee's are granted their human right of getting their original birth certificate! Everyone should know who they were created by, no matter if they are welcomed or not! Had my Grandfather and his mother been given any information, their story very well would have ended up being a Happy one. Please allow this for others that desire it!

A hopeful Granddaughter,
Jennie Chase-Reeves

Cindy Gaskill
Self - Homemaker
Magnolia, TX

I support this Bill with the amended text. My grandfather was adopted in 1905. He has an original birth certificate and a created one with his adoptive parents' names on it. My dad (who is now 85) tried to petition the court for access to my grandfather's original birth certificate and we were told we needed to spend hundreds of dollars to meet with a counselor. We declined since my dad did not want to spend that much money on "counseling" and we still do not have access to my grandfather's original birth certificate. Current law allows for other birth certificates (not involving an adoption) to be viewed openly and by the general public after those are over 75 years old. For example, I have access to anyone's birth certificate who is over 75 years old - including your relatives. My grandfather's original birth certificate is now 115 years old and it is discriminatory that we cannot

view it for historical and genealogical reasons. As a side note, I do know who my grandfather's biological mother was. This was discovered through the use of DNA. There are no surviving close relatives and only a few distant biological cousins to my grandfather. There is no valid reason why we are denied access to this historical document, my grandfather's original birth certificate. Thank you for your time and consideration and I hope you will support HB 1386.

Elaine Cardenas

Self

Wimberley, TX

I support this bill. Everyone should have access to their own records.

Cynthia Smith

Self, retired

Houston, TX

It is a fundamental right to know where/who we came from. It should, therefore, be possible for adult adoptees to access this information about themselves without requiring anyone else's permission.

Lauri Boen

None

Spring, TX

Please vote yes

Paul Gescheidle

Self

Spring branch, TX

Please consider and Pass.
Stating in favor.

Suzanne Mitchell

Texas Democrats

Austin, TX

SUPPORT! Adopted humans have a right to their birth certificate. the same as I do!

Ash Hall

Self (digital coordinator)

AUSTIN, TX

Adopted Texans deserve to have the same access to their birth records that other Texans do. There are so many valid reasons one

would want that information about themselves, ranging from emotional closure to needing assistance in figuring out genetic medical issues. This bill deserves support!

Cynthia Millonzi, COL (Ret)

Self- Retire Military

Wimberley, TX

I respectfully request your support of this bill.

Lisa Pardo

Self - HR Professional

San Antonio, TX

As a Texas Adult Adoptee, my prayer is that you listen carefully to the reasons for allowing us to obtain what is rightfully ours...our original Birth Certificate. Many states in our great country have already acknowledged the legitimacy of making our document available to us.

Texas is strong on individual rights and less government involvement. Why are you involved in this?

Thank you for your careful consideration. Please contact me if you want additional information in about my personal circumstances.

Janet Travis

DNA Now

Alvin, TX

Allow adoptees the right to obtain their complete original birth certificate and complete adoption records without delay.

Kim Dimick

Texas Adoptee Rights Coalition

Houston, TX

As a Texas born adult adoptee, I am in favor of HB 1386. Adult adoptees in Texas are currently treated as second class citizens by being denied the right to obtain our own accurate birth certificate. HB 1386 restores the right for all Texas born adopted persons to access this most intimate unaltered document; the document that records the specifics of their very existence. Every person deserves to know who they are and where they come from. This bill is ultimately about restoring a human right. While some adoptees may choose to search for their natural family, many do not. This bill is not about search and reunion but about accessing your own accurate record of your own birth. That record belongs to the adoptee and the adoptee alone. The state should not be allowed to continue to keep these records a secret from adults who would otherwise be able to quickly access this information had they not been adopted.

This is an issue that impacts every age, ethnicity, class, religion, and geographic area as there are an estimated 900,000 adoptees in Texas who stand to benefit from the passage of this bill. This bill is about ADULTS being able to obtain their birth records without obstruction, not children. This bill rights the wrong of adult adopted persons being cut off from their own birth identity record. This bill allows adoptees to quickly obtain information without having to pay thousands of dollars for private investigators, court or agency records, and DNA testing. HB 1386 allows for a private discreet way for adoptees to obtain vital

information without having to go through third parties or distant relatives. HB 1386 is a clean, common sense bipartisan piece of legislation that ends the discrimination of adult adopted persons and elevates them to the same status as non-adopted persons to equally obtain their most basic unaltered vital record. I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1386.

Karen Whitaker

Self

Irving, TX

As a birthmother, I support this bill wholeheartedly. The time is now. Equal rights, equal access.

Emily Jackson

Self

Richardson, TX

As an adult adoptee, I have no rights in regards to my adoption records in Texas. For the record, neither did my birth mother in 1971. Not only did she not know if I was a boy or a girl, she didn't know the name of the couple that adopted me or where they lived. Adult adoptees are left at the discretion of a county judge after applying to the state to find out what county. Still I could not apply for my original birth certificate until I had discovered my birth mother's name through genetic genealogy.

Janet Michelle, Chelle & Karen Kelly before adopted Baxter

Texas adoptees working rights

Haltom City, TX

"I am asking you to vote in favor of HB1386. I called Edna Gladney adoption agency at age 18, but told I had to wait til age 21 to register; registered & went thru the non-identified letters w bio Mom; awaited to set aside enough money to pay for the \$75 counseling fee required before actual reunion (as was in college/not alot money at the time), but bio Mom got someone help her track me down before counseling happened; what's most upsetting is the letter the agency handed me at end of my tour there when i(went to register, was several pages long and in that letter, my bio mom mentioned she had endometriosis/had hysterectomy as result; yet my parents nor I were never informed of this medical history I much needed, so starting from that point in my life with reunion at age 24 until age 29, I went thru 5 years of treatments/surgeries until I had to have hysterectomy at age 29 due to endometriosis spreading thru my body so severely that it was turning into cancer. I was my doctor's second worst case; his first worst case was a woman 30 years older than me! oh and I'd never even ever heard of endometriosis before then! And yet, I'd seen several doctors before then, and all of them said same thing, "there's nothing wrong with you, it's all in your head" - apparently, they were wrong, and I was very ill from age 14 on...and not diagnosed until had that medical information of biological family I'd needed all along. Just think how this bill could save so many lives & prevent situations like these; pass #HB1386 please!!! Thank you for your time and consideration on this important matter."

Kathleen Thomas, MS

myself

Austin, TX

As an adoptive mother, I fully support adult adoptees being able to receive their original birth certificate. We adopted from Guatemala, and came home with our daughter's original birth certificate, and an amended one with our names on it. In addition, we received a Social Worker's report of the interview with her biological madre, giving us information about the family circumstances and what led to the relinquishment.

With DNA today, people are very likely to find their biological family, if not directly, then through a cousin, who may or may not

have previously known there was an adoption. It is far more discreet to allow original birth certificate access to the adoptee. I would hope that every adoptive parent would support this for their child/ren, most certainly by the time that "child" is 18.

James Rabon

Self

Georgetown, TX

As a fellow Texan I hope that we make sure that we allow open birth certificate records' for our adopted people,

Kathryn Case

Self (retired admin. assistant)

Austin, TX

Thank you for letting us petition our legislators online, thus avoiding the risk of spreading COVID.

Adult adoptees should have the same level of access to their birth certificates that non-adopted individuals may take for granted, without having to depend on the subjective opinion of judges whose opinions and knowledge of the law may vary by jurisdiction.

They should also have access to any supportive documents than accompany their original, and any amended, birth certificate.

They may urgently need access to their biological family's medical histories.

They may not want, or can't afford, DNA tests, lawyers, or private investigators.

Some adult adoptees may have been given false information about themselves and the circumstances of their birth and childhood. For instance, they may have been told they were adopted when in reality they were only fostered. They, and their offspring, deserve to know the truth, and not live in perpetual uncertainty.

For these reasons and those of other petitioners, please pass HB 1386 into law, and if there is a fee, make it affordable and in line with other such fees.

Lauren Digati

Self Marketing Director

Frisco, TX

I fully support allowing adopted persons access to their original birth records. Both of my children are adopted and they deserve the right to have any documentation they want or need regarding their birth records. Please pass legislation that removes all barriers, currently in place, restricting adopted persons from accessing their birth records.

Kit Jones

Self

Ft Worth, TX

Vote for adoptees' rights to have access to all information contained on their original birth certificates and copies of their original birth certificates.

Renee Coffin

Self

San Antonio, TX

I am an adoptee born and raised in Texas (now living out of state). I full heartedly support this Bill. As an adult adoptee, I want to fully know, see, and hold my Original Birth Certificate. Why should it be a secret? It has become even more important to me recently as im a 1year survivor of cancer. Not knowing my biological medical history has impacted my life resulting in numerous tests and genetic testing because i dont know my medical history. Its important to me to know this information especially as i have young children. Every adoptee should have the right of receiving their original birth certificate. Please support Texas adoptees.

Vickie Strong

Self

Keller, TX

Please vote to give adult adoptees access to their original birth certificate.

Tara Racine, Hot Mama

Adoptive Mom

Wimberley, TX

In an adoptive mother of 4. I highly recommend that you permit all adoptees access to their own birth story. It is their right to know and share as they see fit. It's a crucial part of their established sense of self, and essential to heal from the many traumas of even the best adoption (as I'd consider ours to be).

Elizabeth Kimmel

Self

College Station, TX

Adopted people have a right to have access to their personally identifying documentation, including their original birth certificate, just as any other adult has.

Deborah Stanford

Adoptee

Hamilton, TX

All persons over 21 should be allowed to obtain their original birth records without getting a court order.

Cathy Swindle

None

Driftwood, TX

The right to your birth information should be a guarantee to all individuals

Jessica Rivera

Self

Ovilla, TX

Restore birth certificates to adoptees
