

JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE, Maryland Senate
Senate Bill 743, Hearing February 25, 2020

Honorable Senators:

A single page cannot convey the loss to myself and others due to the lack of access to my adoption records, but I will try to highlight key points as best I can.

I was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1963 and placed into adoption 18 months later.

It took until I was forty-nine years of age to gain access to my adoption records. It took an additional eight years to locate all of my biological siblings, including six brothers and sisters on my mother's side and nine brothers and sisters on my father's side. When you add aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and first cousins, there are slightly more than 200 biological family members I never knew existed until a year ago! While many are deceased, including both biological parents, getting to know the others has been among the most profoundly fulfilling and cathartic experiences of my life!

My adoption was essential, because as I have learned, my birth parents were unfit. However, my adoption experience was also full of challenges. And while I escaped much of the dysfunction by joining the military after high school, these challenges persisted. For example, my adopted family forever regarded me as defective; however, only once my adoption records were made available, could I be properly diagnosed with *Complex-Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* and begin receiving appropriate care.

Can you imagine living 50 years of your life with a major health disorder, yet unable to receive the medical attention you required, while also being fed a toxic story by the people who were supposed to support you, telling you that you were defective!? Can you imagine the lost opportunities that resulted from this nonsense?

For starters, all my personal relationships over my entire life have been a disaster: that's what complex trauma does to a person. Complex trauma also does not go away by ignoring it; to heal, I have had to devote most of the last eight years to intense therapy. For much of this time I was unable work because therapy retraumatized me. On top of that, this ordeal has cost me more than \$900,000, including all my life's savings plus over \$200,000 of debt...all because my adoption records were unavailable to me.

In summary, I was able to join the military at 18 to serve, and potentially die, for my country, yet my country was not there for me. I encourage you to reconsider this law in favor of full records disclosure once the adoptee reaches age 18.

Thank you.

William James Wright
Bill@Proclivity.org
Access OBC Maryland