



*Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary*

February 25, 2020

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chairman  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SB 743 – Adoption – Access to Birth and Adoption Records and Search, Contact and Reunion Services – Letter of Information**

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

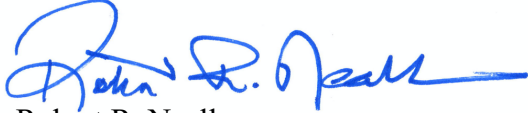
The Maryland Department of Health (Department) submits this letter of information for Senate Bill 743 (SB 743) – Adoption – Access to Birth and Adoption Records and Search, Contact and Reunion Services.

The Department's Vital Statistics Administration is the custodian of many of the vital records discussed in this bill. In the Committee's consideration of this bill, we respectfully ask the Committee to address the following items:

- Under current statute, adoptions that took place prior to 2000 are sealed, and are only made available under court order. This bill effectively unseals all of these records, without providing any ability for biological parents to block disclosure of their information. This would result in approximately 70,000 sealed records of individuals adopted between 1930 and 2000 to become immediately available to adoptees, without any ability of the biological parents to request a disclosure veto or to request redaction of their names.
  - There is no provision in the bill to notify these parents of this change.
- It also removes the ability to file disclosure vetoes for adoptions after 1999, so even those records sealed until age 21 (age 18 under this bill), would be unsealed and made available to parents and adoptees who request them (without redaction) as the adoptee reaches age 18.
- The Division of Vital Records would likely experience a substantial surge in requests for copies of original birth certificates. This would require additional staffing to support.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Director of Governmental Affairs, Webster Ye, at (410) 260-3190 or [webster.ye@maryland.gov](mailto:webster.ye@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert R. Neall", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert R. Neall  
Secretary