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Senator William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB0331

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of the New York Adoptee Rights Coalition (NYARC) regarding Maryland's SB0331. As you may have heard, New York State recently enacted legislation that secures an adult adoptee's right to obtain an unredacted, certified copy of their original birth certificate (OBC) at age 18. NYARC was instrumental in securing this legislation.

Adult adoptees are the *only* group of people who are denied access to the state's original record of their birth. We are denied this document not because we were relinquished or because our parent(s) had their rights terminated for just cause; but because we were adopted. OBCs are only changed and sealed upon adoption. This fact is true regardless of what year we were adopted. This is true in infant, step-parent, intercountry, and foster care adoptions. Had a person not been adopted but, instead, aged out of the foster care system their name and birth certificate would never have been changed. Critical to note is that every child in foster care, like adoptees, was also relinquished or their parent(s) had their rights terminated for just cause.

Obtaining one's OBC is about dignity and equality under state law. It is not about searching for one's biological family. Adopted adults, certainly, don't need the record of their birth to locate family. They need only spit in a vial or swab their cheek. I, personally, have helped upwards of 100 people locate their biological families using consumer DNA testing and public records. The people I have helped range in age from 21 to 83. In a technological world of social media and consumer DNA testing, I assure you that ensuring anonymity for anyone is all but impossible.

There are, approximately, six million adopted people in the United States. We are your neighbors, friends, and family members. We represent first responders, teachers, military, union workers, corporate professionals, and even legislators. We represent every religion, political party, sexual orientation and gender. Imagine if Maryland's current law stated that military personnel/first responders/teachers/LGBTQ/etc., must secure a court order in order to access their original birth certificate. Further imagine if there were age restrictions on such legislation. Marylanders would never stand for such discrimination. We ask that you not stand for it either.

It is our hope that Maryland will, like New York, allow ALL adults born in the state to be able to apply for and receive a copy of their original birth certificate without restrictions or court orders. We hope that you will join New York and the eight other states (Alaska, Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Rhode Island) who allow for complete adoptee equality. You have the potential to get it right and make it equal in Maryland. It is our hope that you make history happen in your great state, just as we did in New York.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annette O'Connell".

Annette O'Connell - Spokesperson