



February 3, 2021

Dear Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly:

Catholic Mothers for Truth & Transparency is a group of birth/first mothers who have lost children to adoption through Catholic-run organizations. We strongly support House Bill 6105: An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Certificates by Adult Adopted Persons.

We are intimately associated with the issue surrounding this bill and therefore uniquely qualified to speak up about it because it is our names that appear on the original birth certificates of those who were adopted. It is our identities that have been cited as a reason to keep current law in place. While we feel this issue is squarely a rights issue and that all adult adopted persons should be treated equally under the law— and we wish the conversation would stop there— we recognize it does not.

For too long, Catholic-run organizations who facilitated the relinquishment of our children (ie. Catholic Charities, various orders of Catholic organizations worldwide, etc.) have spoken for us continually claiming we not only needed their protection at the time we found ourselves pregnant and unwed, but that we still need protection today from our adult sons/daughters whom we were separated from through adoption. In doing so, they have co-opted our voice to formally oppose allowing adult adoptees to access their original birth certificates. Frankly, this is infuriating because it's the exact opposite of how we feel. We write today as a collective voice to tell you for ourselves what is actually best for us. We thank you in advance for your time and for this opportunity to speak out on this very emotional issue.

Esteemed legislators, it pains us to state the grim reminder that history has not been kind to us. When we found ourselves pregnant— and for most of us, unwed— we were blamed wholly for our situation. We were shamed and humiliated. Many of us were sent away to Catholic maternity homes where we were stripped of our identities and forced into silence. We were gaslighted by Catholic authorities to believe we deserved the shame and humiliation they bestowed upon us, gaslighted to believe we were not good or strong enough to keep our babies, that we didn't love them unless we gave them up. By the time this heinous system was done with us, it had accomplished exactly what it had set out to do: render us powerless, alone, and broken to the point where we had no other choice but to relinquish our babies.

As you can imagine, healing from this unspeakable trauma is not easy nor is it swift. The secrecy and the shame we carried affected the very essence of life itself, our relationships— everything from the way we parented subsequent children to the way we connected with our partners, our aging parents and many other important people in our lives. It wasn't healthy for us or anyone in our lives for us to keep carrying this heavy burden alone. So we had to do the work to heal. Only when we began to embrace the truth— the truth that we were coerced by shame and humiliation

to give up our children— only then could we forgive ourselves and work to repair the damage left in the wake of our trauma. For many of us, a reunion with our adult sons/daughters is needed as part of our healing. Like any mother who has lost her child, we need to know they are okay. So, we formally urge you to be cautious of any Catholic-run organization advocating for secrecy or what they call "privacy" in opposition to restoring adult adopted persons' rights to their original birth certificates. These organizations are not advocating for what is truly in our best interests but rather, they are preventing us from being able to heal.

We all had similar experiences regarding the anonymity forced upon us by the Catholic-run organizations facilitating the placements of our children. We ached for our children then and we still ache for them today. Those of us from Connecticut were frankly shocked and surprised that our sons and daughters did not find us when they became of age, something Catholic Charities actually told us would be possible since the law at the time when we relinquished was such that all adult adoptees had unrequited access to their original birth certificates once they reached legal age. Imagine our dismay when we found out later our babies— the ones we supposedly gave up to a "better life"— grew up to be adults living as second-class citizens, prohibited from accessing their original birth certificates? We were promised they would have everything and more, yet they have less and are treated as less-than under current law. Not only is this current law in no one's best interest but it prohibits the healing all of us need to move forward peacefully.

We want you to know we were never "promised confidentiality." And we don't want it. In order to completely demystify the exact documents we signed, three of our members who lost their children in Connecticut through Catholic Charities— one from each of the decades HB 6105 is concerned with— have granted us permission to include their signed agreements to this statement. It's very clear we were advised correctly according to the law and that contrary to what Catholic Charities may be telling you, they were in fact compliant with the law and unable to "promise confidentiality."

Because it is a monumental process to begin healing from this, it's not something not every woman who survived our trauma can or will do in her lifetime. For every 1 mother who remains frightened of being found by her adult son/daughter and is still under the effects of having been shamed into secrecy by Catholic-run organizations, there are 1,999* of us actively trying to heal from the injustice they forced upon us. If we are not already in reunion, *we* are frightened that time is running out. Many of our sons/daughters are grandparents themselves now and their sons/daughters— our grandchildren— are also cut off from their roots by the current law denying adult adopted persons' rights to their original birth certificates.

Senators and Representatives, history has not been kind to us. But you can be. Please pass House Bill 6105: An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Certificates by Adult Adopted Persons.

Sincerely,

Eileen (Woebse) McQuade

Co-Founder, Catholic Mothers For Truth & Transparency

Lost Daughter in 1966 - New York, NY

Guild of the Infant Savior

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of NY

Karen (Galarneau) Quesnel

Co-Founder, Catholic Mothers For Truth & Transparency

Lost Son in 1981 - West Hartford, CT

St. Agnes Home for Unwed Mothers

Catholic Charities of Hartford

<p>Barbara Montgomery 1965 - Washington, DC St. Ann's Infant & Maternity Home Catholic Charities - Washington, DC</p>	<p>Barbara Kluijtmans 1969 - Goirle, Noord Brabant, The Netherlands Huize de Bocht Tilburg Congregate (Catholic Nuns)</p>
<p>Anita Garland 1979 - Belleville, Ontario Canada</p>	<p>Barbara (Baumgartner) Gladfelter 1967 - Kansas City, MI</p>
<p>Betty (Gettig) Holden 1969 - Tampa, FL Salvation Army Home</p>	<p>Carol (Pasquale) Gainey 1962 - Ft. Lauderdale, FL St. Vincent's Home Catholic Community Services</p>
<p>Carol (Kirby) Schaefer 1966 - Richmond, VA Seton House Catholic Social Services - Charlotte, NC</p>	<p>Carolyn (Sanderson) Hoard 1964 - West Palm Beach, FL Catholic Charities West Palm Beach</p>
<p>Catherine Devald 1990 - Norwalk, CT Catholic Family Services - Norwalk, CT</p>	<p>Charlotte (O'Connor) MacAulay 1983 - Charlottetown, PEI Canada St Gerard's Home Catholic Family Services Bureau</p>
<p>Cheryl Steckler 1969 - Las Vegas, NV Catholic Welfare of Las Vegas, NV</p>	<p>Cynthia (Hallam) Glenn 1978 - Springfield, IL</p>
<p>Cynthia (Rounds) McGuigan 1983 - West Bridgewater, MA Catholic Charities - Brockton, MA</p>	<p>Diane (Renaldi) Hook 1961 - Waterbury, CT Catholic Family Services Waterbury, CT</p>
<p>Frances (Guido) Scalise 1959 - Philadelphia, PA St. Vincent's Home Catholic Charities</p>	<p>Glen Frazer 1973 - Oakland, CA St. Elizabeth's Home Children's Home Society</p>
<p>Ginny (Robbins) Beall 1971 - Los Angeles, CA St. Anne's Home for Unwed Mothers</p>	<p>Gretchen Hoffman 1971 - Springfield, MA 1974 - St. Paul, MN</p>

<p>Holly (Hagenow) Harlow 1975 - Hartford, CT Catholic Family Services</p>	<p>Janet (Dotson) Stuessi 1970 - Kansas City, MO Florence Crittenton Home Catholic Charities</p>
<p>Janice (Gallagher) Lau 1969 - Chicago, IL St. Vincent's Infant Asylum & Orphanage Catholic Charities - Chicago, IL</p>	<p>Jennifer (Duff) McMillan 1979 - New South Wales, Australia Catholic Adoption Agency, New South Wales</p>
<p>Jo Ann (Volovski) Van Reenan 1971 - Philadelphia, PA</p>	<p>Julia (MacDonnell) Chang 1967 - Dorchester, MA St. Mary's Infant Asylum - Catholic Charities</p>
<p>Kathleen (Bral) Chafin 1968 - Sioux City, IA Jesuit Province of Midwest</p>	<p>Kathy (Hatt) Aderhold 1972 - Omaha, NE Salvation Army Booth Maternity Home Catholic Charities of Lincoln, NE</p>
<p>Leslie (Pate) Mackinnon 1966 - Mobile, AL Allen Memorial Home Catholic Charities of Mobile, AL</p>	<p>Liana Jones 1984 - Charlottetown, PEI Canada St. Gerard's Home Catholic Family Services Bureau</p>
<p>Margaret (Hoffman) LyBurtus 1966 - Southfield, MI Merrilac Hall Catholic Charities of Mount Clemens</p>	<p>Maria Arbuckle 1981 - Ireland St Patrick's, Navan Road Dublin</p>
<p>Marlene (Weisman) Sassaman 1971 - Newark, NJ Catholic Charities of Newark</p>	<p>Mary (Bergquist) Jeffrey 1967 - St. Paul, MN Catholic Charities of Minneapolis, MN</p>
<p>Marylee (Benham) MacDonald 1962 - Phoenix, AZ Florence Crittenton Home Catholic Social Services, Phoenix, AZ</p>	<p>Maureen Boyle 1969 - New London, CT Catholic Charities, New London, CT</p>
<p>Mimi (Mary) Janes 1971 - Los Angeles, CA St. Anne's Maternity Home Holy Family, Los Angeles Archdiocese</p>	<p>Monique Gentile 1985 - Staten Island, NY</p>
<p>Rosie (Huck) Brant 1971 - Milwaukee, WI Salvation Army Booth Memorial Hospital Catholic Social Services of Milwaukee, WI</p>	<p>Patricia (Hart) Flanagan 1978 - New Bedford, MA Rosalie Hall, Bronx, NY New Bedford Child & Family Services of MA</p>

<p>Patricia Taylor 1961 - West Hartford, CT St. Agnes Home for Unwed Mothers Catholic Charities of Hartford</p>	<p>Patricia (Van Cura) Tiscza 1968 - Bronx, NY Rosalie Hall, Bronx, NY Catholic Home Bureau</p>
<p>Sarah Burns 1968 - San Francisco, CA St. Elizabeth's Home Archdiocese of San Francisco, CA</p>	<p>Yvonne Leist 1967 - Wausau, WI St. Ann's Maternity Home Catholic Social Services</p>
<p>Allisa Brunner 2000 - St. Paul, MN Catholic Charities - Seton Services</p>	

*[Statistics for states implementing access to original birth certificate laws](#). American Adoption Congress, Feb. 2016

Enclosures: Connecticut Catholic Charities Agreements (3)

- (1) Statement dated **August 28, 1961** signed by Diane Rinaldi (Hook) and Attorney James Henebry, retained by **The Diocese Bureau of Social Service of Waterbury** (now administered by Catholic Charities, Inc. Archdiocese of Hartford)
- (2) Statement dated **May 15, 1975** signed by Holly Hagenow (Harlow) who conferred with Attorney Daniel Lynch of **Catholic Family Services** (now Catholic Charities, Inc. Archdiocese of Hartford)
- (3) Statement dated **October 13, 1981** signed by Karen Ann Galarneau (Quesnel) who conferred with Attorney Daniel Lynch of **Catholic Family Services** (now Catholic Charities, Inc. Archdiocese of Hartford)

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This statement will acknowledge that

on Monday, Aug. 28, 1961, I conferred with
(day) (date)

Attorney James Henebry at The Diocesan Bureau
(place where conference

of Social Service in Waterbury, Connecticut
was held) (city)

on my legal rights in connection with my removal as the natural

guardian of my child Frederick Kenneth Rinaldi
(full name of child)

and was advised by him on the law on and the legal effects of

my removal, the appointment of a new guardian of my said child

and related matters.

Dated at Waterbury, Connecticut

this 28th day of August 1961.

Witness:

Edna M. Rinaldi Alana M. Rinaldi
(Signature of Parent)

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This statement will acknowledge that on the day of Monday,
date of May 12, 1975 I conferred with
Attorney Dorice Lynch at
Catholic Family Services on my legal rights
in connection with my removal as the natural guardian of
my - expected - child, Infant Hagenow
and was advised by him on the law and the legal effects of my removal,
the appointment of a new guardian of my said child and related matters.

Dated at Hartford, Connecticut,
this 30th day of June, 1975.

Witness:

Dorice Lynch
Worker

Jolly A. Hagenow
Parent

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby acknowledge that on Oct. 13, 1981, I conferred with Attorney Samuel E. Zuel at Catholic Family Services and was advised by him/her on such legal matters as the keeping of my child, termination of my parental rights, Notice of Hearing, Waiver of Notice of Hearing, Appointment of Statutory Parent, Adoption, Appeal Rights, and related matters.

I further acknowledge that I am fully aware that as the natural parent of Tuloua Halaucan, born on _____, 19_____, I have certain rights to determine how my child shall be raised, and these rights are called parental rights, that these rights can only be taken away from me by a local Probate Court; that I am entitled to a notice of the hearing before the court and an opportunity to appear before the court to state why my parental rights should or should not be terminated.

I am also aware that I may waive my right to notice of the court hearing and that if I do so, I am voluntarily relinquishing or giving up my opportunity to be notified of the hearing date, time and place, and that any action by the court in terminating my parental rights is as binding on me as if I were physically present in the court.

I am considering having my parental rights terminated and having the court appoint Catholic Family Services, Inc., Archdiocese of Hartford as Statutory Parent in my place in order to enable Catholic Family Services to place my child in adoption. I acknowledge that Catholic Family Services has advised me that I need not place my child for adoption, and has not encouraged me to do so and will assist me whatever my decision is. I acknowledge that I make my decision of my free will and without the influence or persuasion of Catholic Family Services. If I agree to have my parental rights terminated, and they are, I understand that I will have no rights of any kind in any matter relating to my child other than by an appeal to the court for a change within 30 days of the court's decision. ~~I have voluntarily agreed to have my child placed in adoption.~~

I understand that I can discuss the legal ramifications of having my parental rights terminated with an attorney of my choice and have been encouraged to do so.

Dated at Hartford, Connecticut, this 15th day of Oct., 1981.

Parent/s Signature: Karen A. Halaucan

Attorney's Signature: Samuel E. Zuel