



February 12, 2023

Dear Distinguished Members of the Texas State House of Representatives,

The *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 the passage of House Bill No. 2006 in its current state.

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, organizations who facilitated the relinquishment of our children 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 important issue.

Esteemed delegates, 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 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 want you to know we were never "promised confidentiality." And we don't want it. Please take 38 seconds and [watch this video](#) to see how we really feel about the topic of "confidentiality."

We all had similar experiences regarding the anonymity forced upon us by the organizations facilitating the placements of our children. We ached for our children then and we still ache for them today. 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.

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.

Representatives, there is no one to protect by keeping any part of the current law in place. If you want to protect a birth mother, then protect her by passing House Bill No. 2006 in its current state. She is more exposed to being outed on a DNA site than ever before right in this moment. Enable her and us, and all of our grown sons and daughters a chance to heal in a humane and dignified way by passing House Bill No. 2006 as it is written.

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

Encl: Members, Catholic Mothers for Truth & Transparency

Members, Catholic Mothers for Truth and Transparency:

Frances (Guido) Scalise

1959 - Philadelphia, PA

St. Vincent's Home

Catholic Charities

Joyce (Baier) Steensrud

1960 - Spokane, WA

<p>Diane (Renaldi) Hook 1961 - Waterbury, CT Catholic Family Services Waterbury, CT</p>	<p>Patricia Taylor 1961 - West Hartford, CT St. Agnes Home for Unwed Mothers Catholic Charities of Hartford</p>
<p>Carol (Pasquale) Gainey 1962 - Ft. Lauderdale, FL St. Vincent's Home Catholic Community Services</p>	<p>Marylee (Benham) MacDonald 1962 - Phoenix, AZ Florence Crittenton Home Catholic Social Services, Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p>Carolyn (Sanderson) Hoard 1964 - West Palm Beach, FL Catholic Charities West Palm Beach</p>	<p>Barbara Montgomery 1965 - Washington, DC St. Ann's Infant & Maternity Home Catholic Charities - Washington, DC</p>
<p>Carol (Kirby) Schaefer 1966 - Richmond, VA Seton House Catholic Social Services - Charlotte, NC</p>	<p>Eileen (Wobse) McQuade 1966 - New York, NY Guild of the Infant Savior Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of NY</p>
<p>Leslie (Pate) Mackinnon 1966 - Mobile, AL Allen Memorial Home Catholic Charities of Mobile, AL</p>	<p>Margaret (Hoffman) LyBurtus 1966 - Southfield, MI Merrilac Hall Catholic Charities of Mount Clemens</p>
<p>Barbara (Baumgartner) Gladfelter 1967 - Kansas City, MI</p>	<p>Julia (MacDonnell) Chang 1967 - Dorchester, MA St. Mary's Infant Asylum - Catholic Charities</p>
<p>Mary (Bergquist) Jeffrey 1967 - St. Paul, MN Catholic Charities of Minneapolis, MN</p>	<p>Yvonne Leist 1967 - Wausau, WI St. Ann's Maternity Home Catholic Social Services</p>
<p>Kathleen (Bral) Chafin 1968 - Sioux City, IA Jesuit Province of Midwest</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>Barbara Kluijtmans 1969 - Goirle, Noord Brabant, The Netherlands Huize de Bocht Tilburg Congregate (Catholic Nuns)</p>
<p>Betty (Gettig) Holden 1969 - Tampa, FL Salvation Army Home</p>	<p>Cheryl Steckler 1969 - Las Vegas, NV Catholic Welfare of Las Vegas, NV</p>

<p>Janice (Gallagher) Lau 1969 - Chicago, IL St. Vincent's Infant Asylum & Orphanage Catholic Charities - Chicago, IL</p>	<p>Lynda (Curry) Szybowski 1969 - Philadelphia, PA St. Vincent's Home Catholic Social Services, Philadelphia</p>
<p>Maureen Boyle 1969 - New London, CT Catholic Charities, New London, CT</p>	<p>Virginia (Cummings) Schaller 1969 - Washington, DC Catholic Charities</p>
<p>Janet (Dotson) Stuessi 1970 - Kansas City, MO Florence Crittenton Home Catholic Charities</p>	<p>Mary Greene 1970 - New Britain, CT St. Agnes Home, West Hartford, CT Catholic Family Services of New Britain</p>
<p>Francine (Ambrogio) Gurtler 1971 - White Plains, NY St. Faith's Home Tarrytown, NY</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>Jo Ann (Volovski) Van Reenan 1971 - Philadelphia, PA</p>
<p>Marlene (Weisman) Sassaman 1971 - Newark, NJ Catholic Charities of Newark</p>	<p>Mimi (Mary) Janes 1971 - Los Angeles, CA St. Anne's Maternity Home Holy Family, Los Angeles Archdiocese</p>
<p>Rosie (Huck) Brant 1971 - Milwaukee, WI Salvation Army Booth Memorial Hospital Catholic Social Services of Milwaukee, WI</p>	<p>Kathy (Hatt) Aderhold 1972 - Omaha, NE Salvation Army Booth Maternity Home Catholic Charities of Lincoln, NE</p>
<p>Glen Frazer 1973 - Oakland, CA St. Elizabeth's Home Children's Home Society</p>	<p>Rosemary (King) Lee 1974 - Atlanta, GA Florence Crittenton Home, Atlanta/Chamblee, GA Child Service & Family Counseling Center (now, "Families First")</p>
<p>Holly (Hagenow) Harlow 1975 - Hartford, CT Catholic Family Services</p>	<p>Eileen Drennen 1976 - San Diego, CA Caritas Family Services - St. Cloud, MN</p>
<p>Elaine Marie (Fitzgerald) Weaver 1976 - Philadelphia, PA St. Vincent's Home for Unwed Mothers Catholic Social Services, Archdiocese of</p>	<p>Cynthia (Hallam) Glenn 1978 - Springfield, IL St. Monica's Unwed Mother's Home - Springfield, IL Catholic Charities of East St. Louis, IL</p>

Philadelphia	
Patricia (Hart) Flanagan 1978 - New Bedford, MA Rosalie Hall, Bronx, NY New Bedford Child & Family Services of MA	Anita Garland 1979 - Belleville, Ontario Canada
Jennifer (Duff) McMillan 1979 - New South Wales, Australia Catholic Adoption Agency, New South Wales	Kathleen Moran 1979 - Evanston, IL St. Therese Hospital - Waukegan, IL The Cradle of Evanston, IL
Linda (Merz) Reboulet 1980 - West Springfield, MA Our Lady of Providence Children's Center West Springfield, MA	Maria Arbuckle 1981 - Ireland St Patrick's, Navan Road Dublin
Karen (Galarneau) Quesnel 1981 - West Hartford, CT St. Agnes Home for Unwed Mothers Catholic Charities of Hartford	Renee (Helewa) Gayder 1982 - Newark, NJ Catholic Charities
Charlotte (O'Connor) MacAulay 1983 - Charlottetown, PEI Canada St Gerard's Home Catholic Family Services Bureau	Cynthia (Rounds) McGuigan 1983 - West Bridgewater, MA Catholic Charities - Brockton, MA
Liana Jones 1984 - Charlottetown, PEI Canada St. Gerard's Home Catholic Family Services Bureau	Monique Gentile 1985 - Staten Island, NY
Eileen (Moran) Mertens 1988 - Sycamore, IL	Candace Cahill 1990 - St. Cloud, MN Caritas Family Services - St. Cloud, MN
Catherine Devald 1990 - Norwalk, CT Catholic Family Services - Norwalk, CT	Melissa (Themar) Geck 1993 - Milwaukee, WI Catholic Social Services of Milwaukee
Allisa Brunner 2000 - St. Paul, MN Catholic Charities - Seton Services	Karen Tessier 2003 - South Hadley, MA Brightside for Children and Families Archdiocese of Springfield, MA

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