

Letter of Support for HB 2006 and SB 2237

The National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter (NASW-TX) endorses HB 2006 by Representative Cody Harris, and SB 2337 by Senator Morgan LaMantia. This legislation focuses on providing original birth certificates to individuals on or after their 18th birthday who were placed for adoption as a child. NASW-TX fully supports the right of all people to have access to basic, unique information about themselves and their origins. HB 2006 and SB 2237 ensure that adopted people have the opportunity to seek out their birth parents if they so choose, thereby allowing them to develop adult relationships with their family of origin.

Research indicates that many adopted people and their birth parents or other birth relatives attempt to find one another at some point during their lives. Accurate information equips people to better handle the stresses and challenges in life. Social work is based upon a client's right to self-determination, and by allowing an adopted person open access to their birth certificate, we are providing them with personal knowledge that can help them grow and thrive as they process the events of their childhood. This will not only support their potential search for relatives, but will also bestow upon them the idea that they are more than equipped enough to handle the intimate details about their own life. Additionally, knowledge about their family's medical history may prove vital when it comes to mental health issues, and can influence both preventative and responsive health care.

Currently a person must petition the court by demonstrating "good cause" reasons why they should be entitled to a birth certificate. Since release of the information is at the discretion of the presiding Judge, results vary from court to court, creating an uneven distribution of inalienable information. But even more so, the decision on whether or not a person receives access to their own birth certificate should not rest on a petition of worthiness, but instead should be categorized as a simple open records request. No person should have their right to seek out their birth certificate be weighed in judgment by a court of law.

By providing an adopted person with their original birth certificate Texas is signaling that the circumstances at the time of adoption do not take precedence over the right to the facts surrounding a birth. Social work avidly proclaims that a person knows what is best for themselves but without the core information about their parents and their birth, a person is lacking the very beginnings of self-knowledge and is at a disadvantage that many people do not face.

Passing HB 2006 or SB 2237 will help rectify that issue and ensure that the choices an adopted person makes are based upon the facts of their birth.

Please feel free to contact NASW-TX with any additional questions.



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