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To the members of Senate Medicaid, Health and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 23.

My name is Julia Derry and I was adopted on September 13th, 1968 from an agency in Columbus, Ohio. One of the things that makes me unique is specifically that date, or rather, the year in which I was adopted. You see, because I was adopted between the dates of January 1, 1964 and September 18, 1996, absolutely everything about me began on that date. Unlike biological parents who share memories of ancestors and important events that are a part of who that family is, my adoptive parents' memory of me began on the day they received me from the adoption agency. Because I was adopted in 1968, the state of Ohio has sealed all known information of my history.

I could not have asked for a better adoptive family. My parents were loving, kind and generous to me and my 3 brothers. All of my brothers were my parents' biological children, but nobody would have ever known that I was "different" than my siblings; I was treated with the same care and love as anyone in my family. In fact I would not have known during my childhood that I was adopted if it were not for my parents openly sharing that with me. Of course, in time, I would have figured out that something was different and that I wasn't "biological". Natural science would have made that clear.

Today I'm speaking to you from the perspective of an adoptee and why it is important to other Ohio adoptees between 1964 and 1996 for Senate Bill 23 to be passed.

It seems that the human race has an innate need to know their origins. As children we ask our parents and grandparents about when they were little girls and boys and what their parents were like. In grade school we are encouraged to know our heritage and all the children sit in a circle and share with one another what they know about "where they came from". The teacher says the name of one student "Joey Esposito, did you know you have Italian heritage?" and explains to the class how she knows, then she goes on to a few other students, "Sally McAllister, - probably Irish...Emanuel Rodriguez...Latin American..." Most people in the US need only the last name of their mother or father to give them a huge amount of insight into their past because the name immediately reveals their "nationality" ...their "heritage". Other names are not so obvious and require further investigation to discover more about the origins of a family. Yet they begin that search with a single name. I am denied that basic right, because the adoption law in Ohio in 1968 closed adoption records by default, my biological mother and I both need to research what is required to open those records and follow those procedures before I will find out anything about my heritage.

Not knowing my past also prevents me from passing my heritage to my children. Not only am I denied that right but my children and grandchildren will share the same injustice. My children are grown now - they have always been inquisitive about "I wonder what my "real" grandmother and grandfather are like; I wonder if they are still living. It is always amazing to see people that look so much alike and you just know that they are related. They may have the same eyes, a smile or laugh but there is no denying it. I have enjoyed seeing that with my children because, believe me, there is no doubt we are related, you can 'see yourself in them'. But growing up I didn't have anyone that I looked like. I couldn't 'see myself' in anyone else. We have all resolved that we will probably never know - not out of the lack of trying; but purely out of fate. Because I'm one of the adoptees in the state of Ohio between 1964 and 1996, it is my fate to not

have the same rights as children born and adopted today.

According to my doctor, had I the opportunity to know my biological parents' medical history, I could possibly have averted an invasive surgery I had a couple of years ago requiring me to be on medication for the rest of my life. And I can only wonder what other fate awaits me because the state of Ohio hasn't done everything they can to provide me with my basic right to know as much about myself as I can possibly discover.

Almost 9 years ago, I contacted the agency where I was adopted to see what information would be available to me. I was told the process I would need to follow, which was to contact the Court in the county of my birth, and that once I paid a fee and filled out a form, I would be sent all non identifying information available. That is exactly what I did and after a few months, I received a brief letter that said my birth mother was 16 years old and no other information was available. It saddened me that there wasn't more information but I was thankful for the information regardless. As I would come across people and hear their stories of how they found their birth parents, it always made me question what information was available to them that wasn't available to me. How could you find someone by just having the information of an age at the time of my birth?

Two months ago, I called the agency again and was told that they could see where I had inquired about years ago. I told them what had been done so far and that I just wanted to check in to see if any more information was available. That is when they asked if I had been sent the non-identifying document from the agency when I first contacted them. I said I had not. This is the beginning of my journey. I received the 8.5 x 11 piece of paper with the most precious information like: Birth mother's birth city, birth father's birth city, a few characteristics about each of them (now I know where my daughter got her China Blue Eyes!) and some information about me. Today I may be close to confirming who my birth mother and birth father are and also my heritage. As momentous as this is for me, it also has a purpose here today. The system and the law that was put in place for those born between 1964 and 1996 didn't provide me even the minimum of what the law said it should provide. I should have received the non-identifying document from the agency when I first contacted them and yet, the process didn't go that way for me and I imagine I am not the only one. The system and the law that is in place today, doesn't protect us, rather it keeps information from us that is our right to have in the first place. This is why it is imperative Senate Bill 23 is passed.

I come before you today as a very blessed individual who was given the gift of life. I am so incredibly grateful for that gift. I have had amazing opportunities with the support of a wonderful family in my life's journey. And I know that my birth parents, would be really proud of the life that they gave and of the person I am.

We all have an innate desire to know our heritage, but more importantly, we have the God given right to know who we are and where we came from, I am asking you to please pass Senate Bill 23, so that I can have the same opportunity as any person adopted outside January 1st, 1964 and September 18th, 1996.

Thank you members of Senate Medicaid, Health and Human Services Committee, for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 23. for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.