

SF 1279 James M. Hamilton MCAR Pro

My name is James M. Hamilton. I am an adoptive father, a birth uncle, a retired attorney, and a volunteer with the Minnesota Coalition for Adoption Reform (MCAR). As an attorney, I have helped many navigate Minnesota's current regulatory maze, on a pro bono basis. None of my clients could have navigated these waters on their own or have afforded to pay for legal services. Without the time, money, and knowledge required, our current laws are a cruel joke on Minnesota's more than 130,000 adoptees.

1. SF 1279 does three things:

Restores adult adoptees' access to their original birth information upon request;

Addresses birth parent concerns in a reasonable and considerate manner, through the use of Contact Preference Forms. Adoptees whose birth certificates already are the subject of requests for non-disclosure will be advised of that fact.

Repeals existing laws on the subject, laws that do not work as intended.

2. SF 1279 is the result of the months-long collaborative effort of many organizations, in a process initiated by Lutheran Social Services and Children's Home Society, facilitated by the Citizens League.

SF 1279 does not open Pandora's Box. DNA already has done that. Restoring the right of adoptees to obtain their own original birth records does not threaten birth parents. Our current laws do, by providing some with a false sense of privacy. Advances in DNA technology and the increasing number of DNA databases have rendered obsolete any protection our current laws may afford such birth parents. (I speak from experience. I was identified as a birth uncle through the use of DNA five years ago.)

Roughly **one-half of one percent of the state's more than 260,000 birth parents** has asked that their offspring's birth certificates not be released to the subjects of those birth certificates. Many, if not most, of these **requests were made retroactively**, long after the relinquishment and adoption of their children. **Ten times as many have consented to their release.** The rest have not been heard from. It is simply unfair to impose the burden of our current laws on more than 100,000 adoptees in a futile effort to shield the identities of a relative handful of birth parents.

Please vote for SF 1279 as introduced. It is the right thing to do and the right time to do so.

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