



# Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish  
Maine Women's Lobby  
In opposition to LD 1688  
An Act To Protect Original Birth Certificates  
May 13, 2019

Senator Carpenter, Representative Bailey, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary: my name is Whitney Parrish, Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am here to speak to you in opposition to LD 1688, *An Act To Protect Original Birth Certificates*.

The Maine Women's Lobby sympathizes with the concerns of adopted persons who seek to learn more about their genetic origins. We do, however, continue to have deep concerns related to the autonomy of adopted persons, as well as that of persons giving birth who choose adoption. We are also concerned about potential safety threats posed to adopted children.

As outlined in statute and noted here today, current Maine adoption law is flexible and adoptee-centered. Maine is one of the few states that allows unrestricted access to original birth certificates. Maine law also allows for a voluntary registry, allowing for contact and medical information if the parties agree. LD 1688 reduces autonomy and choice to persons who have been adopted by requiring birth certificates to be combined when an individual may not want to take this route for various reasons, including privacy and safety. This is particularly important when an adoption happens after abuse or neglect. Further, some adopted people find adoption to be private and want to choose when and to whom to disclose that private information. Requiring that this amended birth certificate have the original birth certificate information and the new legal parent information works against the needs and wishes of these individuals.

We are deeply concerned about the autonomy of a person giving birth who chooses adoption as a path forward for them and the child to whom they give birth. It is difficult to generalize the impact of adoption on a birth mother, but adoption is a highly personal, private choice that is often entered under the presumption that privacy will remain intact. The notion that we would revoke that privacy moving forward is coercive and eliminates autonomy and choice. This also threatens a birth mother's ability to make the decision to choose adoption, potentially putting her in a position to not see adoption as a viable option and force her to make another impossible choice about her pregnancy. Women have the

295 Water Street, Suite 10, Augusta, ME 04330 • 207.622.0851

[wparrish@mainewomen.org](mailto:wparrish@mainewomen.org)

[www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org)



# Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

right to control their adoption just like they have the right to control their pregnancies and bodies. Mandating that an adoption must go one way after a birth mother chooses for it to go another is not free choice. Revoking privacy and not allowing a person who gives birth to control what happens after they give birth stands to eliminate adoption as a meaningful or viable choice.

We urge you to please continue protecting the privacy of both persons who are adopted and persons choosing adoption, so we urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1688. Thank you for your time.

295 Water Street, Suite 10, Augusta, ME 04330 • 207.622.0851  
wparrish@mainewomen.org  
www.mainewomen.org