

# THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

December 22, 2017

RE: A05036-B/S04845-B

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI) is writing to you to respectfully request a veto of A05036B/S04845B. These bills claim to relate to adoptee rights however they instead discriminate against adopted people by creating a separate and unequal system for adopted persons to request a copy of their original birth certificate (OBC).

Since 1996, The Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI) has been on a mission to improve the lives of children and families through research, education and advocacy. DAI plays a vital role in driving adoption reform, addressing critical issues such as the importance of access to original birth certificates and the need for quality post adoption services. We also create practicums for parents and professionals on issues related to adoption preparation, openness in adoption, and identity development.

As the Chief Executive of DAI, I can assure you that A05036B/S04845B is not the appropriate solution to restoring adopted persons right to their OBC in New York. The solution set forth in A05036B/S04845B creates a complex system of checks and permissions in order for an adopted person to request their own vital document. This legislation flagrantly disregards an abundant research base that supports an adopted person's unrestricted access to their birth document and it ignores the opinion of a robust group of adoption reform advocates and experts from across the country and around the world that all oppose A05036B/S04845B.

A05036B/S04845B also continues to further the stereotype, stigma and misperception that has plagued adoption for far too long, harming adopted people and their families. Secrecy in adoption can undermine the integrity of adoption and it can perpetuate shame for all members of the extended family of adoption. For those that support secrecy in adoption, they are doing so in contrast to current best practices and they are doing so in contrast to evidence that supports the need for transparency and openness in adoption. They are also doing so in contrast to the realities of today as new tools like DNA testing and the ability to search for and connect with family of origin become more and more popular.

On a more personal level, I also write to you as a transracially adopted person. From this experience I can assure you that healthy identity development requires a person to be able to know the truth of their birth and be able to access their original, unaltered birth document without restriction. It is impossible to love all parts if you don't know all parts.

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Lastly, I understand that you recently celebrated a birthday. Belated blessings to you! On the heels of that, I humbly ask you to reflect on the power of your biological family connections and your ability to have full access to your birth certificate without restrictions. While so many adopted people have wonderful and loving adoptive families, without access to our original birth certificates, we are not always granted access to our full identity, connections to our roots and vital family health history. Some people are a mess when they lose their keys or phone; imagine losing a piece of your identity forever. I urge you to veto A05036B/S04845B because this is personal. All people deserve to know the truth of their birth as the most fundamental of human rights.

Please be the leader I know you to be and show New York that adopted people deserve equality. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



April Dinwoodie  
Chief Executive, Donaldson Adoption Institute  
Founder, AdoptMent (Adoption Mentoring Program)  
[adinwoodie@adoptioninstitute.org](mailto:adinwoodie@adoptioninstitute.org)