



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

Adoptees Deserve Greater Access to Records

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Adoptees Deserve Greater Access To Records, Says Sen. Montgomery

I am disheartened, as I imagine many New Yorkers are, over the Senate and Assembly's inaction on critical legislation that would give adult adoptees much easier access to their birth certificate and medical history. Currently, New York adoption laws prevent adoptees from obtaining this information unless they go through the judicial system.

Under the Bill of Adoptee Rights (S.2490/A.909) that I am proud to sponsor with Assemblyman David Weprin (D-Queens), adult adoptees in New York State age 18 and older would be able to obtain a copy of their original birth certificates and a medical history form from the NYS

an intermediary.

The Bill of Adoptee Rights has garnered widespread support over the past several years due in large part to the advocacy work of New York Statewide Adoption Reform's Unsealed Initiative, led by John Bahr, a reunited birth mother and founder of Manhattan Birth Parents Support Group.

Bahr contends, "Birth parents were not promised confidentiality; there were no promises of any kind. We were told not to 'disrupt' the home of the adoptive family and to go home and forget about it. The only paper we signed was a surrender paper which terminated our parental rights. No other group of U.S. citizens has their

certificate as well family medical records and does so with respect to birth parents who will have the option to file a contact preference if they choose so. In addition, it allows adoptees to gain knowledge of their religious and ethnic heritage and access to medical information that may be necessary for preventive health care and illnesses that are linked to family history and genetics.

This bill deserves to be brought to the full Senate and Assembly for a vote, and I urge every New Yorker to express support for the bill, and ask legislative leaders to take action NOW!