

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6496

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 5, 1998

Title: An act relating to disclosure of adoption information.

Brief Description: Authorizing disclosure of an adopted person's original birth certificate upon request by the adopted person.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Zarelli, Franklin, Stevens, Horn, Prince and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/28/98, 2/5/98 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6496 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Vice Chair; Franklin, Kohl, Schow and Stevens.

Staff: Joan K. Mell (786-7447)

Background: Under present law, adoption records are confidential except that non-identifying information may be disclosed upon written request from the adoptive parent, the adoptee, or the birth parent. Identifying information may be disclosed pursuant to the provisions of a confidential intermediary process.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Non-identifying information must be disclosed upon written request. The Department of Health must provide a copy of the adopted person's original birth certificate, when requested, to an adopted person 18 years of age or older.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: In the original bill, an adoptive parent of a minor adopted child could obtain the original birth certificate upon written request.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Confidentiality of adoptive records are to protect the adopted child by ensuring inheritance. Confidentiality was never intended to protect the birth mother. An individual adoptive child has a right to his or her own birth records.

Testimony Against: County clerks would be placed in a difficult position with regard to disclosure of records previously treated as confidential. Many of the files are presently

sealed, and the bill does not make clear whether sealed files could be opened. If opened, what information from the files could be distributed.

Testified: PRO: Judy Kennett, Terri Leber, Shea Grimm, Ian Hagemann, Mary Hunt Scoville, Judie Dennis, Open '98; Bob Turk; CON: Debbie Wilke, Washington Association of County Clerks.