



News Release

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Legislation Seeks to Increase Adoptees' Rights

March 3, 2011, JEFFERSON CITY, MO - Adoptees and social workers testified in favor of a bill that would provide adoptees with greater legal rights when trying to find information about their birth parents, while still providing protections to the biological parents.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Barnes (R-Jefferson City), said that the legislation "gives them [adoptees] more tools to find out who their parents are" without giving them everything and ignoring the concerns of birth parents.

Tyler McClay, general counsel of the MCC, agreed that the bill had to strike a balance between the rights of both parties and that the result was a compromise that succeeded in "getting more information to more people."

The Judiciary Committee of the Missouri House heard testimony for HB 427 on Wednesday. The bill would allow adoptees over the age of 18 to use a third party to contact their birth parents and ask for permission to release identifying information. If the birth parents do not want to be revealed, the bill requires a three-year waiting period before the adoptee can ask again.

Another provision in the bill would allow for an adoptee to receive a copy of the original birth certificate and other identifying information upon the deaths of the birth parents.

Bob Haight, the only witness who testified in opposition to the bill, said it didn't go far enough in providing rights to adoptees, arguing that original birth certificates were important to adoptees. He said he still wanted his and that it was "like a diploma" to him.

In the second part of the bill, beginning in August 2011, birth parents would be given a choice to opt-out of having their information available to the adopted child when he or she turns 18.

Laura Long, an adoptee who has a degree in social work and helps other adoptees search for their birth parents, explained that the current Missouri statute "creates many limitations and barriers" on who can search and the amount of information that can be revealed at the conclusion of a search.

She said the legislation would increase the success rate of adoptees trying to find information about their birth parents by removing the requirement that adoptive parents consent to a search.