

State Representative : Clearing the air on restoring adoptee rights

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR APR 24,
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Rep. Chuck Owen, R-Rosepine, lifts his hands during the prayer on opening day of the 2022 General Session of the Louisiana Legislature, Monday, March 14, 2022, in Baton Rouge, La.

STAFF PHOTO BY TRAVIS SPRADLING

Much has been said in public, in social media, and in personal chatter about my [House Bill 450](#).

HB450 is a simple bill that restores the right of an adult adopted person to access their own original birth certificate, upon demand, without hindrances. This bill is about equal treatment for a group of people who have been held as administrative wards of the state. Adopted persons in Louisiana have two birth certificates. When a child is born, the state creates a certificate that records the birth. When parents relinquish a child to be available for adoption, they surrender all claims or ability to control that child in perpetuity. Only at the finalization of an adoption is an amended certificate created, and the original one is hidden away in vital records.

Some opponents are offering up the falsehood that HB450 is about opening up adoption records. It emphatically is not. HB450 restores access to a single piece of paper that documents one's birth.

Some opponents claim mothers who relinquished children were promised some type of confidentiality and that HB450 would break that purported promise. If someone made such a promise, they did so outside the bounds of the truth. Louisiana law does not guarantee lifelong anonymity.

Prior to 1977, all adult adopted persons had access, upon demand, to their own birth certificate. In 1977, in an effort to protect adoptive families from stigma, the law changed. Now, an adult adopted person can access their OBC only if they have enough money to hire a lawyer to petition a court. This discriminates on a financial front and is an affront to the notion of openness.

I have heard from many birthmothers and birthparent organizations that represent thousands. They tell me that they were not promised lifelong anonymity from their own children and that this law is necessary, overdue and humane. I have also heard from many grown people who were adopted and their adoptive parents who support HB450.

Our current laws are based on outdated stigmas and government dominance over the lives of private citizens. HB 450 is about fairness and equality under law.

**CHARLES OWEN, state
representa
tive,
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