

State of Rhode Island
OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE



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SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senate Bill 250
February 25, 2021

Thank you, Chair Coyne, Vice Chair Archambault, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 250 which would reduce the age from twenty-five to eighteen as the age at which an adult adoptee may access a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate.

My name is Jennifer Griffith and I am the Child Advocate for the State of Rhode Island. I am the Director of the agency which serves as the oversight to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). As part of our role as the oversight agency, we monitor the case of each child and young adult open to the Department to protect their legal rights and to promote policies and practices which ensure that youth are safe, and that their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral health needs are met.

In 2011, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed legislation restoring the right of adult adoptees, age twenty-five or older, to access a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate from the Department of Vital Records. Following one year of implementation planning, adult adoptees began receiving their original birth certificates in July 2012. As of February 23, 2021, more than 1600 original birth certificates have been requested and released to adult adoptees in Rhode Island.

Like most states, Rhode Island has set the age of majority at eighteen. At age eighteen, a young adult is no longer considered a minor and has the ability and right to make a variety of legal decisions. Therefore, it is the position of my office that adult adoptees should be able to have the right to request and receive a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate at age eighteen.

My office supports passage of Senate Bill 250 to decrease the age adult adoptees may access a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate from twenty-five to eighteen.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Griffith".

Jennifer Griffith, Esq.
Child Advocate