

# STATE OF NEW YORK

5141

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

## IN ASSEMBLY

February 11, 2021

Introduced by M. of A. BENEDETTO, AUBRY, HUNTER, FORREST, JACKSON --  
read once and referred to the Committee on Judiciary

AN ACT to amend the domestic relations law and the public health law, in  
relation to access to birth records by adoptees

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assem-  
bly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature hereby states its  
2 intention to ensure equal access to vital records and end decades of  
3 discrimination against adoption and adopted persons. The legislature  
4 finds that an adopted person should have access to his or her original  
5 birth record in the same manner as a non-adopted person. The provisions  
6 of this act establish an absolute right under the law for adopted  
7 persons to access their birth certificates while referencing the fact of  
8 their adoption.

9 § 2. Subdivision 2 of section 114 of the domestic relations law, as  
10 amended by chapter 559 of the laws of 1992 and as designated by chapter  
11 601 of the laws of 1994, is amended to read as follows:

12 2. (a) No person, including the attorney for the adoptive parents  
13 shall disclose the surname of the child directly or indirectly to the  
14 adoptive parents except upon order of the court. No person shall be  
15 allowed access to such sealed records and order and any index thereof  
16 except upon an order of a judge or surrogate of the court in which the  
17 order was made or of a justice of the supreme court. No order for  
18 disclosure or access and inspection shall be granted except on good  
19 cause shown and on due notice to the adoptive parents and to such addi-  
20 tional persons as the court may direct. Nothing contained herein shall  
21 be deemed to require the state commissioner of health or his or her  
22 designee to secure a court order authorizing disclosure of information  
23 contained in adoption or birth records requested pursuant to the author-  
24 ity of section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c or section forty-one  
25 hundred thirty-eight-d of the public health law; upon the receipt of

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 such request for information, the court shall transmit the information  
2 authorized to be released thereunder to the state commissioner of health  
3 or his or her designee.

4 (b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a) of this subdivision and any other  
5 section of law to the contrary, an adoptee over the age of eighteen, the  
6 adoptive parents of an adoptee who has not yet attained the age of eigh-  
7 teen, and any lawful descendant or agent of an adoptee may apply for  
8 access to a certified copy of the birth certificate of such adoptee  
9 marked as not valid for identification and with a notation referencing  
10 the circumstance of the adoption. Such certified copy shall be issued  
11 for the same fee charged for a certified copy of the unsealed birth  
12 record of a non-adoptee. No judicial review of the application shall be  
13 necessary for an adoptee to receive a certified copy of his or her  
14 original birth certificate marked as "Certified copy of a Sealed Record  
15 - Not valid for identification with the adoption facts recited".

16 § 3. Section 4132 of the public health law is amended by adding a new  
17 subdivision 5 to read as follows:

18 5. In the case of an adopted person, the certified copy of the certifi-  
19 cate of birth issued upon request shall: (a) contain a notation that  
20 the document is not valid for identification; and (b) recite the facts  
21 of the adoption in the form as follows:

22 "I certify that the record above is a copy of the original birth  
23 record of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert birth name), who was adopted by  
24 \_\_\_\_\_ (adoptive parent) and \_\_\_\_\_ (adoptive parent, if two) on  
25 \_\_\_\_\_ (adoption decree date). This original birth record is main-  
26 tained in a sealed file by the State of New York. This copy is released  
27 pursuant to the laws of the State of New York."

28 § 4. This act shall take effect April 15, 2022.