



## NEW YORK ENDS 83 YEARS OF INEQUALITY FOR ADOPTED PEOPLE

**Press Inquiries:** Annette O'Connell  
New York Adoptee Rights Coalition  
[coalition@nyadopteerights.org](mailto:coalition@nyadopteerights.org)

The New York State Assembly overwhelmingly approved a bill on Thursday that ends 83 years of iron-clad secrecy over the birth certificates of adult adopted persons. The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman David I. Weprin, will restore a right that New York adoptees once had: the right as adults to request and receive their own pre-adoption birth records. The vote was 140-6, with the Senate earlier passing the measure 56-6. It is expected to be signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Advocates have been working on equal rights legislation across the country for more than 50 years, going back at least to Jean Paton in Michigan and New York adoptee Florence Fisher, considered two of the founders of the adoptee rights movement in the early 1970s.

"This is and has always been about equality and doing what's right for all New York adoptees," said Annette O'Connell, an adoptee from Orange County and the spokesperson for New York Adoptee Rights Coalition. "We worked tirelessly to answer questions, dispel myths about this issue, and to come back from the dark days in 2017 when the legislature passed a prior discriminatory bill. Fortunately, Governor Cuomo vetoed that bill, and the people of New York have now spoken to reverse 83 years of discrimination."

"Knowing who we are and where we came from is critical not only to understanding our heritage, but for knowing our health history and any risks it might pose," Speaker Carl Heastie, a Democrat from the Bronx, said in a statement hailing the bill.

"Our outdated laws are designed to protect the anonymity of birthparents who may not have even requested it, with no regard for the needs of the adoptee. Today's legislation will deliver equality for all New York adoptees," said Assemblyman David I. Weprin from Queens.

"New York has finally and unequivocally endorsed the right of all people to possess their own heritage and identity," said Claudia Corrigan D'Arcy, a birthparent and outreach director for Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York. "It also represents the incredibly hard work of legislators the thousands of New Yorkers and civil rights advocates who demanded a change in the law."

"For more than 80 years New York adoptees endured a humiliating, frustrating, costly, and rarely successful process when they requested their own vital records," said Marley Greiner, Executive Chair of Bastard Nation, one of the oldest and largest adoptee rights organizations in the United States. "The passage of S3419 has finally reversed that discrimination and will repeal a Depression-era law that had prevented adults from possessing their own original birth certificates."

With Governor Cuomo's expected endorsement, New York will become the tenth state to recognize or restore the right of adoptees to obtain a copy of their own original birth certificates. With New York now leading on this issue in the United States, other states may soon follow.

"Hundreds of thousands of people were born and adopted in New York and tens of millions of families are linked to those adoptees or to adoption in some way," said Gregory D. Luce, an attorney and founder of the Adoptee Rights Law Center. "It's hard to underestimate what this bill signals and what the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo, Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, and Assembly Member David Weprin will mean for equal rights legislation in other parts of the country. New York got it right. It has made it equal for adopted people and it has now set the bar for other states to follow."

###