



**Testimony of Jean Nasers  
Administrator of Christian Adoption Services**

**Before the North Dakota Senate Judiciary Committee on SB 2284  
Neutral**

**February 3, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman Larson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for providing the opportunity to submit written testimony neither for nor against Senate Bill 2284. I am the administrator for Christian Adoption Services, one of three current adoption agencies in North Dakota. Currently, I personally conduct the adoption searches for our agency. I approach this issue with a deep appreciation for the diverse perspectives and experiences involved, recognizing the legitimate interests of adoptees seeking information about their origins as well as the birth families who once relied upon confidentiality.

The core of this debate revolves around the fundamental need for identity and connection compared with the right to privacy. Adoptees often have a profound yearning to understand their biological heritage, medical history, and personal narrative. The ability to access original birth records can offer a sense of wholeness, allowing for informed medical decisions and personal fulfillment. Conversely, birth families who relinquished children under the assumption of anonymity may have deep personal reasons for maintaining their confidentiality. The state has an obligation to respect both groups' compelling interests in a world where personal information is so widely accessible.

I believe this change addresses some key flaws in our current laws surrounding adoption searches; however, I do believe some provisions should be made to create safety from those who cannot be here to represent themselves in this matter (whether that be for confidentiality reasons or not). To strike a balanced and equitable approach, I recommend the following provisions be incorporated into SB 2284:

1. **Establishment of a Search Registry:** A voluntary search registry should be created and maintained by the state's vital records office. This registry would allow adoptees, birth parents, and biological siblings to register their willingness for contact or maintain their preference for continued confidentiality. Such a mechanism would ensure that those seeking reunification can do so without forcing disclosure upon those who wish to remain private.
2. **Public Awareness & Government Funding for Outreach:** If this bill is enacted, it is crucial to provide adequate government funding to ensure that all residents, particularly those directly affected, are made aware of the changes. This should include a statewide mailing campaign to inform both adoptees and birth families of their rights under the revised law. Transparent communication is essential to maintaining trust and preventing unintended breaches of privacy.
3. **Involvement of Licensed Adoption Agencies in Searches:** When an adoptee obtains their original birth records and seeks further connection, a licensed adoption agency should serve as a mediator in the search process. Our agencies have experience in conducting sensitive outreach while ensuring emotional preparedness for all parties involved. Utilizing professional services can help navigate complex reunions and provide necessary counseling when needed.

It is vital that legislation balances the past commitments made to birth families with the evolving rights of adoptees and the ever-changing impact of modern technology. By incorporating a structured registry, public outreach, and professional mediation, North Dakota can ensure that both perspectives are respected while fostering opportunities for those who wish to reconnect.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge the committee to support a version of SB 2284 that acknowledges both the rights of adoptees and the expectations of birth families, ensuring a fair and compassionate path forward.

Sincerely,

*Jean M. Nasers*  
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