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An Act To Provide Adult Adoptees Access to Their Original Birth Certificates

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 18-A MRSA §9-310, first ¶, as enacted by PL 1995, c. 694, Pt. C, §7 and affected by Pt. E, §2, is amended to read:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law and except as provided in Title 22, section 2768, all Probate Court records relating to any adoption decreed on or after August 8, 1953 are confidential. The Probate Court shall keep records of those adoptions segregated from all other court records. If a judge of probate court determines that examination of records pertaining to a particular adoption is proper, the judge may authorize that examination by specified persons, authorize the register of probate to disclose to specified persons any information contained in the records by letter, certificate or copy of the record or authorize a combination of both examination and disclosure.

Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §2765, sub-§2-A, ¶C, as amended by PL 2001, c. 574, §24, is further amended to read:

C. When a new certificate of birth is established following adoption or legitimation, it must be substituted for the original certificate of birth. After that substitution, the original certificate of birth and the evidence of adoption are not subject to inspection except upon order of the Probate Court or the Superior Court or pursuant to section 2768. The application for legitimation may be released to persons listed on the original birth certificate upon completion of written application to the State Registrar of Vital Statistics or the registrar's designee.

Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §2765, sub-§5, as amended by PL 1979, c. 168, §2, is further amended to read:

5. Copies of original certificate. When the new certificate of birth is established, the state registrar shall provide each municipal clerk who is required by law to have a copy of the certificate of birth on file with a copy of the new certificate of birth. In the case of a Maine certificate of birth established for a person born in a foreign country, a copy of the certificate ~~shall~~must be provided to and ~~shall~~must be maintained on file by the clerk of the municipality where the adoptive parents resided on the date of the adoption. All copies of the original certificate in the custody of any municipal clerk ~~shall~~must be sealed from inspection, except as provided in section 2768, or surrendered to the state registrar as ~~he shall~~ direct the state registrar directs.

Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §2768 is enacted to read:

§ 2768. Access to original birth certificate by adopted person

An adopted person, the adopted person's attorney or, if the adopted person is deceased, the adopted person's descendants may obtain a copy of that person's original certificate of birth from the State Registrar of Vital Statistics, referred to in this section as "the state registrar," in accordance with this section.

1. Requirements. The adopted person must be at least 18 years of age and have been born in this State.

2. Application. The adopted person must file a written application with and provide appropriate proof of identification to the state registrar.

3. Issuance of birth certificate and forms. Upon receipt of the written application and proof of identification pursuant to subsection 2 and fulfillment of the requirements of subsection 4, the state registrar shall issue a noncertified copy of the unaltered original certificate of birth to the applicant. If a contact preference or medical history form has been completed and submitted to the state registrar pursuant to section 2769, the state registrar also must provide that information.

4. Fees; waiting period. The state registrar may require a waiting period and impose a fee for the noncertified copy provided pursuant to subsection 3. The fees and waiting period imposed under this subsection must be identical to the fees and waiting period generally imposed on persons seeking their own birth certificates.

5. Forms; rules. The state registrar shall develop by rule the application form as required by this section and may adopt other rules for the administration of this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 5. 22 MRSA §2769 is enacted to read:

§ 2769. Contact preference and medical history forms

The State Registrar of Vital Statistics shall provide upon request each birth parent a contact preference form and a medical history form as described in this section.

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Adoptee" means the person who is the subject of a birth certificate.

B. "Birth parent" means the person who is the biological parent of an adoptee and who is named as the parent on the original birth certificate of the adoptee.

C. "Contact preference form" means the form developed by the state registrar pursuant to subsection 3.

D. "Medical history form" means the form developed by the state registrar pursuant to subsection 2.

E. "State registrar" means State Registrar of Vital Statistics.

2. Medical history form. The state registrar shall develop and distribute upon request to birth parents a medical history form. A birth parent may use this form to describe the medical history of the birth parent. A birth parent shall fill out a medical history form if that birth parent fills out a contact preference form.

3. Contact preference form. The state registrar shall develop a contact preference form on which a birth parent may state a preference regarding contact by an adoptee. The form must contain the following statements from which the birth parent may choose only one.

A. "I would like to be contacted. I have completed this contact preference form and a medical history form and am filing them with the State Registrar of Vital Statistics."

B. "I would prefer to be contacted only through an intermediary. I have completed this contact preference form and a medical history form and am filing them with the State Registrar of Vital Statistics."

C. "I would prefer not to be contacted. I may change this preference by filling out another contact preference form. I have completed this contact preference form and a medical history form and am filing them with the State Registrar of Vital Statistics."

4. Attachment of forms to birth certificate; treatment. Upon receipt of a completed contact preference form or medical history form, the state registrar shall attach the completed form to the original birth certificate of the adoptee. A completed contact preference form and medical history form have the same level of confidentiality as the original birth certificate.

5. Forms; rules. The state registrar shall develop by rule the forms as required by this section and may adopt other rules for the administration of this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 6. Effective date. This Act takes effect January 1, 2009.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a process by which an adult adopted person may obtain a copy of that person's original, unaltered birth certificate. This bill also allows a birth parent to include with the child's original birth certificate a form that indicates whether the parent wishes to be contacted by the child and a medical history form.