

# JOHN WITTWER LAWYERS

1019 MAIN STREET - P.O. BOX 447  
SWEET HOME, OREGON 97386-0447

JOHN R. WITTWER  
jwittwer@peak.org

TELEPHONE: (541) 367-5195  
FACSIMILE: (541) 367-5189

May 13, 2013

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair  
Members of the Oregon State House Judiciary Committee

*re:* Senate Bill 623 – Adoption Records

Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee:

I write in my individual capacity in support of Senate Bill 623. I have been in private law practice since 1975 and have appeared in hundreds of adoption cases throughout Oregon on behalf of licensed adoption agencies, adoptive parents, birth parents, putative fathers, children and extended family members. I am a member and vice-chair of the Oregon State Bar Family Law Section's Standing Committee on Adoption Law and a member of the Oregon Law Commission's Adoption Records Work Group.

Court records of adoption proceedings in Oregon are currently segregated and sealed. Access to those records is subject to prior judicial approval. Senate Bill 623 changes how Oregon courts deal with records in adoption proceedings. I believe Senate Bill 623 improves Oregon law and should have your support because:

- It clarifies what must go into a court file in an adoption case;
- It requires certain information in a court's adoption file to be flagged for heightened confidentiality protection because of the sensitivity of the information;
- It identifies those whose entitlement to access to sealed adoption court records cannot rationally be disputed and eliminates costly barriers to that access;
- It gives an adult who was adopted in Oregon as a child access without court order to selected parts of the adult's sealed court adoption records; and
- It keeps the requirement for prior judicial approval of access for others whose entitlement to access may not be obvious.

I expect to attend the Committee's May 14<sup>th</sup> work session and will gladly respond to questions relative to this brief statement or to offer further testimony about the bill. I ask that you include this letter in the record of proceedings on Senate Bill 623. Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

*/s/ John R. Wittwer*

John R. Wittwer