

Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization

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Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now

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HB2901

Infant Safety Devices/Safe Haven Baby Box Authorization

House Early Childhood and Human Services Committee Hearing

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OPPOSE

Written Submitted Testimony in Opposition

by

Marley E. Greiner, Executive Chair

This is joint testimony submitted by Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization and Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now. I am the Executive Chair of BN and the owner of SSHBBN, the world's largest baby box information, educational and media source website in the world, with hundreds of pages, I am including 3 supporting documents to this testimony. I hope to be here by remote, but I have connection problems so am forwarding this to you as well.

Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization is the largest adoptee civil rights organization in the United States. We support only full unrestricted access for all adopted persons to their original birth certificates (OBC) and related documents.

Over 25 years ago, our Ballot Measure 58 restored the right of all Oregon-born adopted persons the right to obtain their OBCs without restrictions or conditions. Thousands of Oregon adoptees and their biological families have benefited from that measure. Since then Oregon had led the nation by passing further legislation to secure openness and transparency in its adoption system, access for the adopted and their biological parents to adoption files and courts records, and to dispel overall adoption shame and hypocrisy of the past and into the future. Oregon is by far, the gold standard for adoptee equal rights in US. The Oregon adopted automatically expect to be treated with dignity and respect.

It is with great alarm then that legislators are proposing—and apparently making it a priority-- to take a backward step and promote the secretization of adoptees, their records and histories with the introduction HB2901. This bill authorizes the use of “newborn safety device,” popularly known as “Safe

Haven Baby Boxes” that allow parents—that is, overwhelmingly “mothers in crisis-- to anonymously stick their infant up to 60 days of age, in a box in a wall and walk away

We urge you: DO NOT PASS HB2901

The promotion and use of Safe Haven Baby Boxes is anti-adoptee, anti-adoption, anti-family, and unethical. Boxes are a danger to the physical and mental/emotional health of mother and child. Abandonment boxes are a slap in the face of every parent who has followed standard and ethical child relinquishment procedures. The boxes are a slap in the face of the 6 million adopted people in the United States today who are subjected to archaic and discriminatory adoption secrecy laws such as sealed birth and court records. They are a slap in the face to Oregon adopted people who have come to see Oregon as an ally in the battle for equality. They promulgate the old secretsystem that adopted people have battled for over 70 years to abolish.

Baby abandonment box promoters subscribe, whether or not they realize it, to the long-discredited “blank slate” theory of adoption, reducing adoptees (whom they assume box babies will become) to familyless, historyless commodities—gifts given to strangers with no thought of the consequences to to infant legal and psychological welfare, or that of their biological parents.

Baby Box advocates promote boxes as a consumerist “choice”— a simple solution for mothers so “desperate” that unless they can dump their newborns anonymously in a box- in- a- wall they will kill them or at least discard them dangerously while simultaneously praising these mothers for loving their babies so much they can't kill them. This is called cogitative dissonance. Saving babies from whom? When asked to provide evidence of the efficacy of Safe Haven Baby Boxes, advocates can cite no studies or any other facts—only an intuitive “we just know.” The fact is that the number of reported dangerous discard cases throughout the US has remained steady for decades.

As far as I can tell, only 2 reported cases of discard have occurred in Oregon since 2017.

Recently the Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University's Infant Abandonment Working Group published *Legislative Report: US Policy Responses to Infant Abandonment and Infanticide*. (attached or download at bioethics.yale.edu/infant_abandonment)) This, is to my knowledge, and I've researched and written about Safe Haven/Safe Haven Boxes since 1998, the first study of the use and efficacy of “newborn safety devices.” Although we disagree with some of the report, this study is well-researched and important. It should make everyone think twice about adopting their use in Oregon for ethical, moral, practical, and economic reasons.

As for economics, don't think for one moment think that these devices are free as advertised by Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc, the non-profit that controls the entire baby box industry from bill-writing and lobbying to manufacture to installation to hotline to promotion to media. The organization initially operated on voluntary donations from individuals, ministries, fraternal organizations, non-profits, and foundations, It still collects substantial funds from them, but in the last couple of years states and local jurisdictions have diverted taxpayer dollars to pay for them. Currently Wyoming, which has had no documented cases of newborn discard in at least 8 years, has a bill to allocate \$300,00 to pay for them. The fiscal note indicates this could be the tip of the iceberg. Indiana allocated \$1,000,000. New Mexico, with no box law on the books, \$330,00. San Antonio, Texas allocated nearly \$450,000 for 12 boxes.

They have not been installed because the City Attorney doesn't like what the company's contract demands of the city. Some locations have taken money from Covid and Homeland Security accounts. In Union Township, Ohio, outside of Cincinnati, township trustees decided it would be OK to bypass Ohio law requiring 24/7 staffing at box locations. When a local researcher discovered, upon visiting the fire station, that it was unstaffed with a working box, the trustees decided to hire an extra firefighter to babysit the facility; thus, taxpayers were dunned not only the cost of the box but paying an extra full-time firefighter at union scale with benefits.

Abandonment device advocates claim that even traditional Safe Haven laws, with their anonymous “relinquishment” provisions, are tricky and dangerous. “Women demand anonymity,” they claim. Women, to be “safe,” must have the ability shortly after birth to skulk around dark obscure (but “prominent”) spots outside of hospitals, fire or police stations to drop their babies into a box, like trash, and walk away. This crazy scheme is considered a way to alleviate their shame. No one will ever have to know.

But people will know. While the devices are touted for “newborns,” which for most people means just that a few days old, under Oregon law infants up to the age of 60 days can be dumped in a box. That means that infants with a known parent(s), family, social connections, a Social Security Card and any number of other community ties to their parents can be unceremoniously disappeared inside a box. No one will ask “Where's the baby?”???? Seriously!

Although, the current Safe Haven Baby Box initiative is a natural outgrowth of the Safe Haven movement, the traditional Safe Haven organizations —the very people who developed Safe Haven laws— oppose baby boxes.

The adoptee voice has been silenced in baby box discourse by design. We trust you will listen to us. Currently adoptee rights organizations through the United States are on record opposing baby boxes. Advocates and SHBB Inc in particular, refuse to respond to adoptee objections in any serious manner. The company's hotline operator and counselor publicly called us “mentally unstable.” The founder of the company said on TikTok, “So take your little trauma narrative [*headbutt*] and go somewhere else.” The overall response, when given is “you hate adoption.”

What we hate are deceptive relinquishment practices, rooted in shame and secrecy that lead to drastic permanent solutions to temporary problems and deny the babies who are adopted under this system, when the grow-up, their birth and adoption records, histories, and context. [Here is a link to organizations throughout the US that oppose boxes.](#) (stopbbnow.org.,our-friends)

The causes of infant discard are not addressed by Safe Haven Baby Boxes:

- poverty
- inability to secure affordable medical treatment and care
- denial or ignorance of pregnancy
- Draconian immigration policy and practice
- substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse
- shame, crime, mental illness, dysfunctional families, social isolation, and poor communication skills.
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What we demand is ethics and accountability in adoption and related childcare practices, not a band-aid solution to social, political, and mental health problems that cause newborn discard to happen.

Here is where I would normally list our objections, but instead I am attaching the SSHBBN bullet point sheet which is easy to follow point by point.

Please think carefully about HB 2901. Please don't betray Oregon's heritage and records of transparency in adoption and support and advocacy of adopted people and their rights. vote Do Not Pass. Thank you.