



Adoption Rights Alliance Speaking Notes

to the

Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration

on the General Scheme of the Birth Information and Tracing Bill 2021

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Authors

Susan Lohan

Adoption Rights Alliance Co-founder; Member of the Collaborative Forum

Email: susanlohan@hotmail.com

Mari Steed

Adoption Rights Alliance US Co-ordinator

Email: maristeed@gmail.com

Good afternoon everyone. Myself, Susan Lohan and Mari Steed, are very pleased to make this submission on the proposed 2021 Birth Information and Tracing Bill to this Joint Oireachtas Committee.

Mari and I have worked in the area of advocacy of adopted peoples' rights for over two decades. We bring to the debate our personal experiences as adopted people -- in Mari's case, as one of the more than 2,000 children trafficked to the US and elsewhere from Ireland -- as well as years of research, evidence-gathering and political lobbying in this arena. In my own case, I was an unaccompanied infant at a state and private hospitals, which were excluded from the Commission of Investigation's terms of reference.

Many of our cohort have died in the decades of inaction on the State's part to recognize their rights as Irish citizens and as adopted people. This inaction has led to serious human rights abuses and ongoing discrimination, which has been noted by IHREC, ICCL, and Special Rapporteurs at the UN. It stands in conflict with Article 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We recognise that this Bill represents a significant advancement in the view of the State on the rights of adopted people to identity and personal information. However, several key sections of the Bill remain problematic for us.

- Unconditional access to birth certificates is NOT provided for
- Access to Personal Information & Records is NOT for All
- Definitions of information are NOT rigorous
- Relatives of those who died in institutions may NOT apply for their relative's information
- Information on Siblings is NOT complete
- The Language and Tone of the Bill is NOT representative of a Transitional Justice Approach

We are grateful to our Clann Project colleagues, who have produced a comprehensive list of amendments to the Bill as it stands, and we have echoed these same elements in our own submission. We wish to confirm to members of the Committee that those elements align with the position of Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA).