

NEWS



From State Representative Sara Feigenholtz

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Feigenholtz Legislation to Improve the Lives of Those Touched by Adoption Passes Full House

Package of Bills now seeking approval in Senate

Springfield – Legislation sponsored by State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D- Chicago) that would streamline Illinois adoption processes, provide protections for birth parents and improve the type of information adults who were adopted as children can receive, (overwhelmingly) passed out of the House and now moves to the Senate for consideration.

HB 4641 addresses the wide disparity between adoption regulations in Illinois counties, as well as provides protections for birth parents, adoptees and adoptive parents. The bill eliminates the red tape and expense of obtaining a foster care license for parents who only intend to adopt a child.

“Adoption is an emotional process for everyone involved. The goals of these bills are to make that process as smooth as possible while providing protections for both sets of parents and allowing someone who is adopted gain answers to important questions they have the right to know as adults,” said Rep. Feigenholtz who is an adoptee herself.

The other piece of legislation, HB4590, allows an adult who was adopted as a child access to additional information about the circumstances surrounding their adoption including why the biological parents decided to put their child up for adoption, and whether the adoptee’s biological parents kept in contact with the adoptive parents. The information does not reveal any identifying information about the biological parents.

“This legislation answers the question of “why” that so many adoptees want to understand. I know for me, it made a world of difference,” said Adoption Reforms Committee Chair Rep. Feigenholtz.

Both bills were co-sponsored by Rep. Anna Moeller (D- Elgin) and Rep. Ann Williams (D- Chicago), who are also adoptees.

“As an adopted child from Pennsylvania, I wish I had access to this type of information. It just helps with closure on an issue adoptee’s may understandably have questions about,” said Rep. Williams.

The House also approved HB 5551, which asks the Department of Children and Family Services to look closer at the best interest of a child in foster care who’s parents are incarcerated. The bill would help incarcerated parents keep their parental rights so long as it is determined to be in the best interest of the child. Nationally, it is estimated that 2% of incarcerated fathers and 11% of incarcerated mothers have children in foster care.

These bills enhance legislation Rep. Feigenholtz help pass in 2010, which became the most expansive access to birth and identity information legislation in U.S. history in 2010.

The bills previously passed out of the House Adoption Reform Committee members which is comprised of members who are adopted, adoptive parents or members whose lives have been touched by adoption. The committee is unique in that it works in a bipartisan fashion focusing on making Illinois a welcoming state for families formed by adoption.

Full text of the legislation can be found here:

(HB 4641) <http://bit.ly/23fwdD3>, (HB 4590) <http://bit.ly/1V8d3NT> (HB5551) <http://bit.ly/1RYYsSR>

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