



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## Senator Montgomery's Adoptee Rights Bill Signed into Law

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY November 15, 2019

| ISSUE: **ADOPTEE RIGHTS, ADOPTEE RIGHTS BILL**

November 15, 2019

For immediate release

### **SENATOR MONTGOMERY'S ADOPTEE RIGHTS BILL SIGNED INTO LAW**

Yesterday, Governor Cuomo signed the historic Clean Bill of Adoptee Rights (S3419 – Montgomery /A5494 – Weprin) into law to restore unrestricted access to original birth certificates for all adult adoptees. This will be the first time adult adoptees have such access since these records were sealed in 1936.



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*I am so proud to have been the Senate sponsor of the Clean Bill of Adoptee Rights. I thank Governor Cuomo for signing this historic piece of legislation and I thank my colleague, Assemblyman David Weprin for his unwavering commitment to this issue. This has been long overdue. We owe our success to the advocacy of thousands of adult adoptees who have fought tirelessly on this issue for over 20 years. The level of support I received for this legislation from adult adoptees all across the state and the nation was astounding. It is important that they have the right to seek answers about their health, their family history and their heritage.”*

Assemblyman David I. Weprin said, "The signing of this adoptee rights bill is a momentous step forward for adoptees across New York State. After many decades, adoptees will finally

share in the same human and civil rights as other New Yorkers who are free to access their family histories and medical backgrounds. I commend Governor Cuomo for signing this landmark bill ending discrimination against adoptees statewide and I thank Senator Velmanette Montgomery for carrying this bill the Senate."

"The enactment of S3419 by Governor Cuomo is an Excelsior moment. It is a major, historic step in the ongoing effort to restore adoptee human and civil rights in New York and across the United States", said Tim Monti-Wohlpert, the National Legislative Chair and New York State Representative of the American Adoption Congress. Monti-Wohlpert, a New York born adoptee who started a grassroots petition, with over 9,000 supporters, added, "We thank Governor Cuomo for this historic leadership which may soon result in 'clean' adoption reform in other states. We of course also thank our sponsors Senator Montgomery and Assemblymember Weprin, and their staffs. As with so many other issues, the Empire State is helping lead the way towards vital progress for equality."

"This will change countless lives and push other states to do what is right and what is equal," said Annette O'Connell, the spokesperson for the New York Adoptee Rights Coalition, which spearheaded efforts to pass the historic legislation. "This happened because state and national organizations like Bastard Nation, Adoptee Rights Law Center, and the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York came together as a coalition to assure that the bottom line of equality was always the only line being pursued."

"For more than 80 years New York adoptees endured a humiliating, frustrating, costly, and rarely successful process when they requested their own vital records," said Marley Greiner, Executive Chair of Bastard Nation, one of the oldest and largest adoptee rights organizations in the United States. "The enactment of S3419 reverses that discrimination and repeals a Depression-era law that had prevented adults from possessing their own original birth certificates."

“Hundreds of thousands of people were born and adopted in New York and tens of millions of families are linked to those adoptees or to adoption in some way,” said Gregory D. Luce, an attorney and founder of the Adoptee Rights Law Center. “It’s hard to underestimate what this bill signals and what the leadership of Governor Cuomo, Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie, Senator Montgomery, and Assembly Member Weprin will mean for equal rights legislation in other parts of the country. New York got it right. It has made it equal for adopted people in that state. It has set the bar for 40 other states and the District of Columbia to follow.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2019-S3419

- 
- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Establishes the right of adoptees to receive a certified copy of their birth certificate upon reaching the age of 18

February 06, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Velmanette Montgomery**

Do you support this bill?