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Birthmother Shares Life-Saving Information With Birth Daughter

Minneapolis, February, 2007 -

Forty five years ago as a scared 17 year old pregnant girl, Sandy Sperrazza signed a document giving her only daughter up for adoption. Last year Sperrazza was diagnosed with a rare strain of cancer. DNA testing revealed that she as well as other family members was missing a gene needed to battle carcinoma. She and her relatives are genetically predisposed to a cancer so lethal that female relatives are advised to undergo a radical mastectomy as a defense measure.

After a rigorous chemotherapy regiment, her health status is unknown at the present time. Still, she is thankful that she was reunited with her birth daughter who, at Sperrazza's request, has taken a DNA test that reveals that she too carries the missing gene.

Sperrazza says, "Every adoptee without updated medical information is put at risk. Who knew at 17, when I filled out my health history for my daughter's file, that cancer would become a time bomb for her and for her children and their children? In the ensuing years four of my siblings have been diagnosed with cancer. The adoptee's need for information goes beyond simple curiosity. Missing information can be life threatening."

As branch coordinator for Concerned United Birthparents (CUB) for over 33 years, Sperrazza heard the personal stories of many hundreds of birthparents and their adopted children. That perspective as a birthmother and an advocate for all parties in adoption leads her to support SF347, a bill that would give adopted adults access to their original birth certificate, a document that is currently denied them under Minnesota law.

Aside from medical concerns, Sperrazza believes that birthmothers from the past who are held hostage under a passé system of secrecy and shame are prevented as are their children from healing. She says, "It is time for us to declare that we never asked for secrecy or to be protected from the children that we love and long to know. As a measure of that love, we can provide vital information including health history that can literally save lives. That health history changes over the span of our lives and is not available to adoptees."

Her support of Minnesota adoption reform reflects the views of a majority of birthmothers in states where such reform has been legislated. "It stands to reason that most birth parents would fear the revival of old pain, and yet 80 – 90 percent of them welcome contact."

For more information, call _____ at _____