



LCS Committees <committees.lcs.ga@coleg.gov>

Relinquishment of Child in Newborn Safety Device

1 message

tanya regan <tregan1980@gmail.com>

Wed, Mar 5, 2025 at 5:04 PM

To: "committees.lcs.ga@coleg.gov" <committees.lcs.ga@coleg.gov>

Testimony for HB25-1257, Relinquishment of Child in Newborn Safety Device

Dear Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify for this bill. I represent myself and I fully support this commonsense bill to help young mothers who may find themselves in the unfortunate situation where they need to turn to a place to where their babies can be safely cared for.

While I can't imagine the desperation a young woman must feel to have to resort to using these services, I am truly grateful to Representative Keltie for bringing forward and updating this important piece of legislation.

I understand that this bill simply gives these young mothers more time, in the event they need to place their babies and the provision that there will be enhanced safety monitoring devices, will give these young mothers assurance that their babies will be safe while until transferred. This time is critical, critical for the young mother who, while she has most certainly bonded with her new gift, can sort things out, seek out alternative solutions and if in the end she chooses to use this service has been given an additional gift of time. I fully support this bill and ask for a yes vote from every member of this committee.

Respectfully,

Tanya Regan

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Tanya S. Regan
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Submitted Testimony

HB 1257

Infant Safety Devices/Safe Haven Baby Box Authorization

House Health and Human Services Committee

March 5 2025

OPPOSE

Submitted Testimony

by

Marley E. Greiner, Executive Chair. Bastard Nation

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 largest abandonment box information, educational and media resource website in the world. I am submitting this testimony into the public record but sending a pre-hearing copy to members of the committee for review..

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.

Since 2016 we have opposed “Safe Haven Baby Boxes” aka “newborn safety devices” that allow parents to anonymously stick their infant in a box in a wall and walk away, leaving them with no birth record, identity, or history.

In 2015 Colorado passed legislation that restored the right of all Colorado-born adoptees to obtain their OBCs without restrictions or conditions. Passage of HB1257 and the legalization of baby abandonment boxes will be a step back from the state's proud commitment to adoptee support, dignity, and respect.

This submitted testimony contains 3 sections (1) Our talking points sheet covering objections and concerns; (2) Adopted people speak out against baby abandonment boxes; (3) Key issues.

Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now!

Why We Oppose Safe Haven Baby Boxes

Adoptee rights and adoption reform organizations throughout the United States oppose deceptive relinquishment practices that are rooted in shame and secrecy, lead to drastic permanent solutions to temporary problems, and create a population of adopted people who have no birth records, identity, or history.

We seek ethics, transparency, and accountability in adoption and in related child welfare practices, not band-aid and gimmick solutions to social, political, and mental health problems that cause newborn discards. Contrary to long-standing and established child welfare policies, the use of baby boxes (sometimes called “newborn safety devices”):

- Creates a secretive and shadow child welfare system that eliminates informed consent, a child’s identifying information, and any record of the social and medical histories of newborns. Baby boxes operate to eliminate a child’s right to identity by eliminating accurate birth registrations and records.

- Commodifies infants and normalizes “legal” baby abandonment as a consumer choice, without acknowledging the lifetime psychological consequences for the baby and the mother, including, but not limited to, abandonment issues, shame, guilt, substance abuse, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation. Boxes represent state-promoted throwaway culture; some critics call them instruments of child abuse.

- Replaces professional best practice standards with unprofessional and unethical “relinquishment” procedures. Baby boxes instead give vulnerable parents a right to abandon an infant out of convenience or ignorance, with no counseling, documentation, or discussion of established alternatives, such as adequate medical care, financial and material family preservation assistance, or crisis nurseries.

- Deprives the non-surrendering parent of the right to rear her or his own child. Baby boxes eliminate any protections to prove that a person using the box has a legal right to surrender the baby. Embarrassed, frightened, or abusive partners, spouses or family members, and even sex traffickers, will use (and undoubtedly have used) baby boxes without the consent or knowledge of the (other) parent, with no repercussions. Baby box proponents dismiss the real, dangerous, and violent situations experienced by women, simply advocating that “if your baby is taken, just call the police.”

- Disenfranchises natural parents—particularly the non-surrendering parent (usually the father)—of their right to due process by eliminating their ability to locate the child, thus denying them knowledge of (among other things) the dependency proceeding to which they are a party. State-based Putative Father Registries, touted as a safeguard, are rendered useless since records are filed by the name of the mother who remains anonymous by law.

- Creates at-risk adoptions due to possible litigation from the non-surrendering parent or biological family members who may learn of the abandonment and seek custody.

- Contravenes family reunification guidelines of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA)

and dispenses with tribal rights embedded in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which can also lead to federal litigation.

Encourages women to keep problematic pregnancies a secret. The promotion of baby boxes discourages family and professional communication and eliminates assistance for sexual and physical abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, and social isolation—factors that cause nearly every newborn discard. Studies indicate that once a pregnancy is acknowledged and discussed the chance of discard almost always disappears.

Hides crimes such as rape, incest, spousal and partner abuse, and human trafficking.

Promotes and supports the non-profit ministry Safe Haven Baby Boxes, Inc., a million-dollar corporation that controls the manufacture, promotion, sales, installation, and referral of women to baby boxes in the United States. It has created the baby box market and lobbies legislatures, produces boxes at its own factory, installs the devices, operates a hotline that refers pregnant women to box locations near them, and holds press conferences when a newborn is left in a box. Rather than protect legitimate privacy interests of the infant, it uses boxed children as fundraising tools for its ministry.

Discourages women from seeking pre-and post-natal care, instead encouraging dangerous and unsafe unattended births in the community, outside of a hospital.

Baby boxes do not address the causes of infant discard. Anonymously dropping a baby into a box and walking away does not obviate or solve the root causes of newborn discard/neo-naticide, which are:

- poverty
- inability to secure affordable medical treatment and reproductive health care
- denial or ignorance of pregnancy
- draconian immigration policies and practices
- substance abuse and physical and sexual abuse
- shame, crime, mental illness, dysfunctional families, social isolation, and poor communication skills.

More Information: Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now
Marley Greiner 614) 795-6819
stopshbbnow.org

2023 Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now!

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Adopted People Speak Out Against Baby Abandonment Boxes

Under adoption law, children that are adopted are not a party to the adoption; that is, we have no legal standing in the adoption. We are simply transactional objects handed from one party to another like a piece of furniture or an old car. Our lack of “standing” continues on a legal and social level when we reach adulthood. We are expected by certain parts of society (but not the 2015 Colorado legislature, thank you!) to be silent, passive, and grateful that we were not tossed in a dumpster or ground up at a recycling plant. These outcomes, which common sense and statistics prove are highly unlikely except in the imaginations of those who weaponize child welfare and adoption to achieve their own goals, have nothing to do with us except to conflict with our civil rights. It is not uncommon that baby abandonment box bills and OBC/records bills are introduced in the same session and scheduled for hearings in the same committees—heard hopefully, not on the same day. Baby box folks proclaim “women demand anonymity.” Adoptees demand “restore of our civil rights to our own birth certificates, records, and identities.” This is happening in Georgia right now.

As the result of this social and legal debasement, when adopted people speak against baby abandonment boxes, we and our arguments and voices are dismissed and ignored and sometimes silenced by box advocates, particularly, Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc. (SHBB Inc). This multi-million dollar family-operated Christian ministry and non-profit is the only source in the country for all things baby box. It shapes and dominates baby box discourse, as well manufactures and places the devices in the walls of fire and EMS stations and hospitals across the country.

For years the organization has refused to respond to adoptee objections in any serious manner. The company's hotline operator and counselor posted on SBHBBN's Facebook page that [adoptees who object to boxes are “mentally challenged.”](#) The founder/CEO of the company [said on TikTok](#), “So take your little trauma narrative [*headbutt*] and go somewhere else.” The generic response, when given, is “you hate adoption”—a deflection that targets us as cranks, radicals, and outliers, when in truth we represent mainstream thought regarding boxes. Boxers are the outliers and radicals in their attempt to interfere in maintaining and growing best practice standards in pregnancy care, child welfare, and adoption,

Not one adoptee rights, birthparent rights, or adoption reform organization in the United States supports the legalization and installation of baby abandonment boxes. Moreover, child welfare and adoption professionals, researchers and scholars oppose them. Although, the current Safe Haven Baby Box initiative is an outgrowth of the Safe Haven movement, traditional Safe Haven advocacy organizations—the very ones that developed Safe Haven laws—oppose baby boxes. A little over a year ago, SHBB Inc, filed a nuisance civil claim for at least \$75,000 against the Florida's highly respected A Safe Haven for Newborns, its founder and director Nick Silverio, the South Trail Fire District, and the fire district's public relations director for discussing their objections to boxes with local authorities considering installation of a box. This bizarre suit, which charges defamation and tortious interference with contract or business relationships, seems to have been made in retaliation for Mr. Silverio's success in the Florida legislature killing baby box bills, which in turn has forced towns that wish to open boxes to invoke their Home Rule status. At the time the suit was filed, the state had 1 box only and since has added 4 more. The suit is expected to go to court this Spring. [More information on the suit including legal filings, a legal analysis, and an article from the Daily Beast is here.](#)

Several organizations in Colorado have opposed bills similar to HB1257 in the past. I expect that they will either appear in person at the hearing or submit their own testimony on how baby abandonment boxes can negatively impact the goals of their mission and those they serve.

We are especially happy that the Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University's Infant Abandonment Working Group, and its associate director Dr Lori Bruce has joined the growing list baby

abandonment box opponents. The working group under her direction published the important [Legislative Report: US Policy Responses to Infant Abandonment and Infanticide](#) late last year. To the best of my knowledge this is the first research published on the efficacy and use of baby abandonment boxes in the US. Its findings do not support the rush to support them. The working group also sent an [open letter to the US Department of Health and Human Services](#), signed by over 100 medical, legal, and allied professionals, scholars, lawmakers, adoption and child welfare professionals and adoptee rights activists requesting it increase its involvement in public health policy responses to crisis pregnancies and to specifically oversee “the rapidly expanding network of unregulated devices” under its purview.

[Here is a link to selected opposition throughout the US.](#)

Adopted people have a plethora of opinions about adoption which are irrelevant to baby abandonment box discourse.

What is relevant, however, whether our individual opinions be good, bad, or ugly, is that we hate deceptive relinquishment practices, rooted in shame and secrecy, exemplified by baby abandonment boxes and the mission to create anonymous mothers and children. No one should be forced to parent when they can't or don't want to parent, but informed consent is paramount in the decision to relinquish a child for adoption. There are correct ways to do things, and encouraging parents to stick their baby in a box and run away isn't one of them. This secret scheme leads to drastic permanent solutions to temporary problems and denies the babies who are adopted under this system, when they grow up, to enjoy their civil and human rights to birth and adoption records, histories, context...and dignity.

What we demand is ethics and accountability in adoption and related childcare practices, not a band-aid solution to social, economic, political, and mental health problems that cause newborn discard to happen. Boxes simply make people feel better. They are cheaper than addressing real problems.

This seems to be a good place to add a related note. SHBB Inc's hostility to criticism and to questions about their operation are not limited to adoptees and those in the adoption cohort. One reporter told me a couple years ago that the CEO of SHBB refuses to take her calls due to her reporting on a state investigation of baby boxes. Just a couple weeks ago, the CEO went off on an investigative [reporter from WEWS-TV](#) (Cleveland)—one of 2-3 local reporters to give pushback and ask serious questions. (The video shows more than the printed news story). Of course, SHBB Inc has a right to refuse a media interview, but the optics....on camera...broadcast...

I trust that this committee, after this introduction to adoptee opposition will listen seriously to the adoptee voice today and agree with us.

Key Issues

As noted, our Talking Points sheet explains our objections, but here are some key issues we want to emphasize that present bad outcomes for newborns, their mothers and fathers, and to society as a whole.

Safety, Health, and Welfare of Mother and Child: Promotion and the availability of baby abandonment boxes discourages women from seeking pre- and post-natal care. Instead, SHBB Inc facilitates those in so-called “crisis pregnancies” to undergo dangerous and unsafe unattended births and care outside of a medical and safe setting.

SHBB Inc claims that it advises its callers to seek counseling services (the company's counselor and outside sources), pre- and postnatal care, safe delivery, etc, **but the 9 minute video (deceptively called a Public Service Announcement) which has had 27K views on YouTube, is a step-by-step guide, targeting teenage girls, on how to keep pregnancy, delivery, and birth concealed--a secret.** The

video panders to a fantasy that pregnancy, even under secret conditions, is a walk in the park, physically and emotionally. Those who follow its guidance could die. Their babies could die. According to SHBB Inc, the youngest mother they have guided to the box was 12.

This is the link to the [video](#).

This is the link to the [blog](#) I wrote explaining some of the problems.

We know of 2 deaths associated with baby abandonment boxes. SHBB Inc announced on TikTok that one of its mothers OD'd and died shortly after boxing her baby--a suspected suicide. (The video seems to have been taken down [but here is what I wrote about it](#)) In Blackfoot, Idaho, [an 18-year old mom left her deceased newborn in a box](#) and is now being prosecuted, so far, with failure to report a death. There could be other tragedies that we don't know about.

Although the boxes undergo testing at the SHBB Inc headquarters and at box locations before they go live, they are also unregulated. The US government does not consider them to be medical devices nor are they UL tested and listed. It makes no sense that the lamp on your nightstand is required to be UL listed, but baby abandonment boxes, which plug into a wall and contain a triple alarm system are not. The SHBB Inc CEO has refused to discuss why they are not listed. ([See video here](#). *Courtesy of Chris Hicks*)

Choice and Consumerism: The promotion and use of Safe Haven Baby Boxes is anti-adoptee, anti-adoption, anti-family, and unethical. They promulgate the old secret system that adopted people have battled for over 70 years to abolish and did so successfully in Colorado.

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 to mould (often through God's agency) with no thought of the consequences to the infant's legal and psychological welfare or that of their biological parents.

Instead, advocates promote boxes as a consumerist “choice”—a simple solution for parents (usually 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. Proponents simultaneously and seriously claim at box blessings and other public events that these “dangerous” parents love and want to protect their babies not discard or murder them, but may be forced to do so without the “100% anonymity” their company guarantees with the box. When asked to provide evidence of the efficacy of baby abandonment boxes, advocates can cite no studies or 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.

Cost of Boxes: Please don't believe that these abandonment boxes are free as advertised by Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc. HB1257 doesn't allocate public funds now, but the law can be amended in the future to authorize government payments.

SHBB Inc initially operated on voluntary donations from individuals, ministries, fraternal organizations, non-profits, anti-abortion organizations, and foundations. Substantial funds from them are still collected, but in the last couple of years states and local jurisdictions have diverted taxpayer dollars to pay for them. This year, the Wyoming legislature rejected a bill, before it was even officially introduced, to allocate \$300,000 and possibly more to pay for boxes, even though no discards were reported for at least 8 years. Indiana has allocated \$1,000,000. New Mexico, with no box law on the books, \$330,000. San Antonio, Texas, allocated nearly \$450,000 for 12 boxes that remain unpaired and uninstalled [due to the City Attorney's unspecified concerns about SHBB Inc company's proposed contract with the city](#).

Some locations have taken money from COVID and Homeland Security accounts.

In Union Township, Ohio, outside of Cincinnati, township trustees decided it was OK to bypass Ohio law requiring at the time 24/7 staffing at box locations and to outright pay the approximately \$16,000 lease fee in its entirety with taxpayer money, not donations. When local conservative political watchdog Chris Hicks, who has no compunction taking on all comers, just not Democrats and liberals, visited the fire station, to see what the box was all about, he found the facility empty with a working box in its wall. Hick's cried foul! He continued his investigation, chronicling it on Facebook and YouTube including a video of the baby box CEO trying to hide in the bathroom to avoid his questions during a public meeting. Not to be beaten, the already over-spending trustees dug in deciding to hire an extra firefighter to babysit the facility and keep the box running. SHBB Inc promised to fund the new firefighter but did not. ([See video](#), *courtesy of Chris Hicks*.) Thus, local taxpayers were dunned not only the cost of the box but paying an extra full-time firefighter at union scale with benefits.

Hicks took his investigation farther by filing a complaint against SHBB Inc with the Ohio Public Health Review Board when a mandatory five year review came due. Hicks presented his findings at the hearing and the board took them seriously and agreed on some of them. One location was shut down until it complied with the law, and others were investigated. This led to a SHBB Inc-sponsored phone-bomb campaign with the CEO and supporters calling the Department of Health every working day for a month demanding to speak to the director to force him to follow through on a previously arranged personal meeting that he canceled when the CEO attempted to change the "rules of engagement," by packing the meeting with fire chiefs from baby box locations.

Company Control of Boxes: Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc, invented and controls the entire baby box industry from bill-writing and lobbying to manufacture to installation to hotline to promotion to media. They frequently use babies boxed through their program in public events and fundraisers, a practice that adopted people find exploitative and manipulative. There is no other source in the US for the devices. In other words, HB1257 and similar bills throughout the country are vendor bills.

I have in my possession copies of SHBB Inc lease contracts and Policy Procedures in Goshen and Munster, Indiana, as well as a 5-page scathing memorandum from the Goshen Clerk-Treasurer stating his concerns about the city's agreement with the company and recommendations regarding them. Quite an eye-opener! I would be happy to furnish them to anyone interested in reading them.

SHBB Inc controls baby box practices and procedures. Box locations are required to inform SHBB Inc within 2 hours of a drop-off; then prohibited from announcing the case publicly until the company makes an official announcement that appears in news and social media. Last year a fire station in Alabama was taken to public task when the local newspaper reported a drop-off before the company was able to blow its own horn. The company frequently states that each baby dropped in the box brings them more publicity more money.

Each box serves as an advertisement for the box company; therefore the company controls the signage on and around boxes. Some locations have attempted to include their own signage that would direct parents to consider a traditional personal walk-in relinquishment. They have asked to make available information about medical issues mothers may experience and compilations of information on local medical, counseling, legal, and family services but the company reportedly refused these requests

Instead, SHBB Inc offers their own information packet in an orange bag found inside the box. From what we have seen, the packet contains minimal and possibly wrong information. A box located in the Cincinnati area referred mothers to a midwife in Fort Wayne, Indiana, approximately 180 miles away. [The information sheet on post-natal problems](#) (also online in FAQ form) is a joke. The Ohio Health Review Board found the bag to be debris as per state law, and suggested it could be hung on a hook or kept in some kind of container next to the box door. I can't remember for sure, but I think they are now

required to include Ohio government information. I have no idea if the company complied with the order.

Finally, SHBB Inc runs its own private “family registry.” The company's low info orange bag packet includes a printed form that parents can fill out at the time of drop-off or any time later to establish health and social histories—and even include identities-- to mail to the company. This registry, which does not compare favorably to the professionally designed detailed voluntary medical and social history forms available to parents in traditional Safe Haven cases that states offer. The SHBB Inc form is held “anonymous” and is not available to appropriate state agencies or adoption agencies appointed by the state to administer custody, care, and baby placement, Nor, as far as we know, is this information given to the adoptive parents of boxed babies. The company purposefully squirrels away for its own unknown purposes personal and “private” information about babies and parents, that in normal adoptions would most likely be shared. Images of the SHBB Inc form and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services form are [found here](#)

Tribal Rights: I can find no reference in the current Colorado Safe Haven law that recognizes ICWA protections or any state tribal protections for Safe Havened infants. This really surprises me since I thought Colorado would include them. Lack of these protections open the state to federal and tribal litigation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. I realize I've included a lot here (more than I usually do in testimony) to research, ponder and discuss. I urge you not to make a decision today so you can study the documents and continue the discussion with us stakeholders and among yourselves. I hope you discuss HB1257 carefully and with an open mind to its many problems. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call, text, or email me.

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Introduction

Dear members of the Health and Human Services Committee of the great state of Colorado. I am writing to oppose HB25-1257 which would permit the use of newborn safety devices. My name is Dr. Patrice S. Martin and I come to you as an independent citizen of the United States of America. I am here today because I care deeply about the issue of save haven baby boxes, adoptee rights, and specifically about issues that affect Children and Families. I am here AGAIN in opposition to this type of legislation.

My Experience

In October of 1976 I was an abandoned at birth. My Birth Mother already had one child, my sister who was two at the time. She began a relationship with a man at work. She was a nurse an RN at a hospital in Pittsburgh PA. She was just starting out in her career. Not making much money and she had the shifts at the hospital that no one wanted. She found herself alone. Pregnant. Hiding it. And unable to bring herself to tell anyone in her family or the man she had been seeing at work. My mother lived in an apartment in a family member's home and helped to take care of her mother financially. Her parents were proud of their daughter for becoming a nurse and she felt immense pressure, and she did not want to let anyone down. She already had one child by a man she was not in relationship with at the time. She had hopes for a new career that was going to hopefully turn her economic situation into something better. But she was in crisis.

When it came time to deliver me, she asked if she could have the next night off. She was denied. So, in the wee hours of a chilly morning in October of 1976 she delivered a me on the bathroom floor of that home, cut the cord and in what seemed like a whirlwind she dressed me in my sister's clothes and put me in a box and took me to a dumpster area at a mall not too far from her house. Gathering her wits about her. Early that morning she anonymously called the police and reported that there was a child behind the mall.

After being reunited with her and hearing her story I know that...she did not do this methodically, or rationally. She did this because she was in a mental health crisis. She is one example of many stories of the many women, even friends who have had crisis pregnancies that I have heard over the years.

Why I am Writing

I am here opposing this legislation. For two main reasons:

- It promotes diminished outcomes for birth mothers: In an article entitled Evolution and resolution: Birthmothers' experience of grief and loss at various levels of adoption openness...states that birth mothers experience a sense of grief and loss over time. This grief and loss look like the five stages of grief when mourning a death and has been proven to lead to identity issues, trouble forming relationships post adoption, and continued shame at the exploitation of birth mothers. This has lifelong implications that my siblings and I know all too well. Years later after being in many mental health institutions for a myriad of issues including substance abuse, my birth mother made her story of abandoning her child known to a therapist who suggested that when she get reunited with her now two other children...that she tells them they had another sister. The oldest child...Sarah goes on to explain that my mother was never

Patrice Martin
Testimony Statement Against HB 1257

the same after that day she abandoned me, and they ended up in Foster Care. She explained that there was a distance in my mother. A darkness she carried.

- Secondly It promotes abandonment of infants with no regard to the downstream effects of consequences of the child/eventual adult's mental health I am a part of the adoptee community, and we have many groups and have formed coalitions lifting our voices for adoptee rights. A tie that binds many adoptees is that we suffer in our adult lives with CPTSD, abandonment related disorders which are often lifelong struggles. It is important to me that we do not fund laws that would promote fast tracking this type of estrangement and not look to supporting mothers in crisis with much needed resources.

What We Can Do as Caring Citizens

What we can do together is take a few steps toward the solution...by (I will only say the bold statements) Will use the filler if asked questions.

Fund Programs that Promote Family Preservation and Support Women in Crisis

- **By funding programs such as Early Head Start that provide in home options for mothers to care for their infants**
 - o Their Mental Health
 - o The Child's Developmental Health
 - o Nutrition Counseling & Health Coaching
 - o Childcare Funding Expansion
 - o And Provide Supports for Fathers Through Fatherhood Initiatives
- **Build Stronger Partnerships with Nonprofits and Faith Communities**
 - o Do more outreach to local nonprofits and communities of faith to start programs that would have a maternal health aspect with focus on prevention.
- **Shift the dollars to fund 2-3 More positions in Maternal and Child Health** at the Department of Health so more outreaches can be done at medical centers and with maternal health advocates (which my sister now proudly is) who are looking at Social Determinants of Health for women especially those in marginalized populations.

I speak on behalf of thousands of adoptees who are against these boxes. I appeal to you to review the research provided by institutions such as Yale, and others in your community and beyond.

I thank you for taking the time to allow me to write this. I know that my experiences provide a personal narrative face to the problem as well as offer practical solutions for us to move forward in the near future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrice S. Martin
Adoptee Rights Activist
Patrice.s.martin@gmail.com
856-264-7734

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- **Build Stronger Partnerships with Nonprofits and Faith Communities**
 - o Do more outreach to local nonprofits and communities of faith to start programs that would have a maternal health aspect with focus on prevention.
- **Shift the dollars to fund 2-3 More positions in Maternal and Child Health** at the Department of Health so more outreaches can be done at medical centers and with maternal health advocates (which my sister now proudly is) who are looking at Social Determinants of Health for women especially those in marginalized populations.

I speak on behalf of thousands of adoptees who are against these boxes. I appeal to you to review the research provided by institutions such as Yale, and others in your community and beyond.

I thank you for taking the time to allow me to write this. I know that my experiences provide a personal narrative face to the problem as well as offer practical solutions for us to move forward in the near future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrice S. Martin
Adoptee Rights Activist
Patrice.s.martin@gmail.com
856-264-7734

Patrice Martin
Testimony Statement Against HB 1257

Introduction

Dear members of the Health and Human Services Committee of the great state of Colorado. I am writing to oppose HB25-1257 which would permit the use of newborn safety devices. My name is Dr. Patrice S. Martin and I come to you as an independent citizen of the United States of America. I am here today because I care deeply about the issue of save haven baby boxes, adoptee rights, and specifically about issues that affect Children and Families. I am here AGAIN in opposition to this type of legislation.

My Experience

In October of 1976 I was an abandoned at birth. My Birth Mother already had one child, my sister who was two at the time. She began a relationship with a man at work. She was a nurse an RN at a hospital in Pittsburgh PA. She was just starting out in her career. Not making much money and she had the shifts at the hospital that no one wanted. She found herself alone. Pregnant. Hiding it. And unable to bring herself to tell anyone in her family or the man she had been seeing at work. My mother lived in an apartment in a family member's home and helped to take care of her mother financially. Her parents were proud of their daughter for becoming a nurse and she felt immense pressure, and she did not want to let anyone down. She already had one child by a man she was not in relationship with at the time. She had hopes for a new career that was going to hopefully turn her economic situation into something better. But she was in crisis.

When it came time to deliver me, she asked if she could have the next night off. She was denied. So, in the wee hours of a chilly morning in October of 1976 she delivered a me on the bathroom floor of that home, cut the cord and in what seemed like a whirlwind she dressed me in my sister's clothes and put me in a box and took me to a dumpster area at a mall not too far from her house. Gathering her wits about her. Early that morning she anonymously called the police and reported that there was a child behind the mall.

After being reunited with her and hearing her story I know that...she did not do this methodically, or rationally. She did this because she was in a mental health crisis. She is one example of many stories of the many women, even friends who have had crisis pregnancies that I have heard over the years.

Why I am Writing

I am here opposing this legislation. For two main reasons:

- It promotes diminished outcomes for birth mothers: In an article entitled Evolution and resolution: Birthmothers' experience of grief and loss at various levels of adoption openness...states that birth mothers experience a sense of grief and loss over time. This grief and loss look like the five stages of grief when mourning a death and has been proven to lead to identity issues, trouble forming relationships post adoption, and continued shame at the exploitation of birth mothers. This has lifelong implications that my siblings and I know all too well. Years later after being in many mental health institutions for a myriad of issues including substance abuse, my birth mother made her story of abandoning her child known to a therapist who suggested that when she get reunited with her now two other children...that she tells them they had another sister. The oldest child...Sarah goes on to explain that my mother was never

Patrice Martin
Testimony Statement Against HB 1257

the same after that day she abandoned me, and they ended up in Foster Care. She explained that there was a distance in my mother. A darkness she carried.

- Secondly It promotes abandonment of infants with no regard to the downstream effects of consequences of the child/eventual adult's mental health I am a part of the adoptee community, and we have many groups and have formed coalitions lifting our voices for adoptee rights. A tie that binds many adoptees is that we suffer in our adult lives with CPTSD, abandonment related disorders which are often lifelong struggles. It is important to me that we do not fund laws that would promote fast tracking this type of estrangement and not look to supporting mothers in crisis with much needed resources.

What We Can Do as Caring Citizens

What we can do together is take a few steps toward the solution...by (I will only say the bold statements) Will use the filler if asked questions.

Fund Programs that Promote Family Preservation and Support Women in Crisis

- **By funding programs such as Early Head Start that provide in home options for mothers to care for their infants**
 - o Their Mental Health
 - o The Child's Developmental Health
 - o Nutrition Counseling & Health Coaching
 - o Childcare Funding Expansion
 - o And Provide Supports for Fathers Through Fatherhood Initiatives
- **Build Stronger Partnerships with Nonprofits and Faith Communities**
 - o Do more outreach to local nonprofits and communities of faith to start programs that would have a maternal health aspect with focus on prevention.
- **Shift the dollars to fund 2-3 More positions in Maternal and Child Health** at the Department of Health so more outreaches can be done at medical centers and with maternal health advocates (which my sister now proudly is) who are looking at Social Determinants of Health for women especially those in marginalized populations.

I speak on behalf of thousands of adoptees who are against these boxes. I appeal to you to review the research provided by institutions such as Yale, and others in your community and beyond.

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Testimony Statement Against HB 1257



March 4, 2025

RE: Opposition, HB25-1257 Relinquishment of Child in Newborn Safety Device

Chairperson Brown and members of the House Health & Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and share our concerns regarding HB25-1257 Relinquishment of Child in Newborn Safety Device.

The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado promotes justice, religious liberty, and interfaith understanding through building relationships in order to educate, advocate, and catalyze social change. We are an interfaith public policy and advocacy organization with over 400 congregations in our statewide network, representing over two dozen faith traditions. Our commitment to reproductive justice is deeply connected to and aligned with our mission and vision for our state. As explained in our Vision Statement, the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado imagines “faith communities from many traditions and backgrounds who are committed to work grounded in our shared values, in order to engage in collaborative action to dismantle systemic oppression.”

Although it may seem like this bill is rooted in concern for infants, the unfortunate reality is that it is deeply rooted in anti-abortion sentiment. Coloradans already made their voices heard regarding abortion with the recent passing of Amendment 79. In addition, Colorado already has safe haven laws in place. Programs like those behind “newborn safety devices” advance a dangerous narrative that the surrender of very young infants through programs like theirs is an alternative to abortion or a substitute for accessing the right to choose or not choose to carry a pregnancy. We stand behind the recent decision made by Coloradans to exercise their own faith and conscience when making this decision.

Our hope is that, when a parent finds themselves in difficult or desperate circumstances, they will find compassion and support, along with comprehensive and accurate information that meets their needs. The installation of “newborn safety devices” disregards the factors that go into the decision whether or not to carry a pregnancy. Instead of spending money on building these devices, those resources could be used to address some of the economic and social factors that can lead a parent to surrender their child, like housing instability, lack of healthcare access, or domestic violence.

Thank you for considering our concerns regarding the bill and why we feel compelled to urge a No vote on HB25-1257.

Sincerely,
Shara Smith, Chief Executive Officer
Interfaith Alliance of Colorado

House Health & Human Services

03/05/2025 01:30 PM

HB25-1257 Relinquishment of Child in Newborn Safety Device

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Jennifer Niblo For themselves	As a mother of two children I adopted from foster care I'm urging you to please send this bill out for a full vote. It's such a basic safe guard for children and a caring step for us to take as a society. When a biological parent is not able to care for a child and would not otherwise reach out for help for their child, giving them an option like this can save lives. This should be implemented at our earliest opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.
Kristine Garofalo For themselves	Please strongly consider voting YES on HB25-1257 to amend the safe haven (existing) law from 72 hours to 30 days. Providing women more time to make an informed and educated decision re: their child is in the best interest of the child, mom and community. Being a mom myself and having familiarity with the foster care system, let's not rush (hormonal) mothers into this decision. Let's give mothers the time and grace needed to make this life long and difficult decision.
Richard Uhrlaub Against Coalition for Truth and Transparency in Adoption	Dear Chair Brown and Members of the HHS Committee, I respectfully request a NO vote on this bill. A similar measure died in the Senate last year, opposed by multiple organizations and individuals. This bill is a step backward into medieval thinking, not forward. - Colorado already has over 900 Safe Haven locations, which allows a mother to avoid protection for child abandonment with face-to-face interaction . This helps protect both mother and child. - The monopolistic organization/individual (based in the Midwest) promoting Baby Boxes utilizes a troubling but profitable business model.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Relinquishment is clearly defined in statute, and requires counseling, preparation and the signing of papers. Dropping off a baby should not fall under that definition.- Extending the maximum time frame to 60 days from 72 hours is bad policy that sends a casual message about the seriousness of surrendering a baby.- Adoptees deserve as much information about their origins as possible. This bill promotes shame and may send a message that vulnerable infants are a dirty secret. This can have lifelong, damaging effects on the identity development and psychological development of adoptees. <p>Baby boxes go too far with a profit-driven, deeply flawed idea at their core. See research from Santa Clara law professor Michelle Oberman who has studied why mothers murder their infants for years, and has identified a particular mindset and profile.</p> <p>I urge your NO vote on this bill. Thank you.</p> <p>Rich Uhrlaub Adoption Search Resource Connection Coalition for Truth and Transparency in Adoption</p>
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To: Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee
From: Khoa Nguyen | Young Invincibles | MD/MBA Candidate at the University of Colorado
Re: HB25-1257 - Relinquishment of Child in Newborn Safety Device

Mr. Chair, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with you. My name is Khoa Nguyen. I am representing Young Invincibles as one of their Youth Advocates. For my background, I am currently completing my MD at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and my MBA at the University of Colorado Denver Business School. Short of applying to residency and obtaining my MD, I have fulfilled all curricular and licensure requirements expected thus far for the MD. I am here today to encourage you to **oppose HB25-1257**.

As an organization committed to uplifting the voices of young adults and increasing access to comprehensive, affordable health care, Young Invincibles is opposed to this bill as we believe in a more comprehensive approach to reproductive health care that prioritizes education, contraception access, abortion services, and support for all birthing people, including those who choose to relinquish custody, to ensure people can make the decisions that are right for them and their families.

In my personal capacity, I am incredibly concerned about these infant abandonment devices. Since 1999, 4100 infants have been safely surrendered nationwide under Safe Haven laws [1]. While safe haven surrenders traditionally occur via face-to-face encounters with a nurse, EMS worker, or other professional, infant abandonment boxes strip personal interaction, thereby curtailing crisis counseling and medical care. This depersonalization via the devices would remove the provision of necessary supportive care for individuals most at risk for infant relinquishment during their time of crisis.

Additionally, if infant relinquishment were to occur, every member of this committee would universally agree with me that infants should be relinquished in a setting where they can receive immediate access to medical care. Contrastingly, infant abandonment devices are not medical devices capable of supporting infant care. The FDA has determined that the main box manufacturer, Safe Haven Baby Boxes, and their product does not qualify as a medical device [2]. The FDA does not recognize these as medical devices, yet they are being used in medical context. Why should the State of Colorado fund a tool that lacks clear oversight, regulation, and patient safety standards?

As a future physician, one core aspect of my training is an emphasis on preventive care - the proactive identification and management of health risks to prevent disease onset, progression, or complications. Preventive care has three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention focuses on preventing the disease before it occurs. Analogously, if infant relinquishment is the "disease", then it is better that we focus on addressing underlying factors that lead to it. Consequently, our society would benefit better from improved funding for family support programs, mental healthcare, housing support, and more locally-based child placement programs - all of which could prevent or reduce infant relinquishment [3]. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists advocates for policies and practices that promote access to

To: Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee
From: Khoa Nguyen | Young Invincibles | MD/MBA Candidate at the University of Colorado
Re: HB25-1257 - Relinquishment of Child in Newborn Safety Device

healthcare services, counseling, and support systems to address underlying issues that may lead to infant relinquishment [4].

Conclusively, if we want to address the issue of infant relinquishment, we should not just focus on the stem but the underlying roots. This bill fails to address the underlying roots of the problem and would be a waste of taxpayer money and funding for the State of Colorado. I urge the committee to **reject** HB25-1257. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Khoa Nguyen | MD/MBA Candidate
University of Colorado School of Medicine | University of Colorado Denver Business School
Youth Advocate | Young Invincibles
Junior Fellow | Global Council on Science and the Environment

References

1. Wilson RF, Klevens J, Williams D, Xu L. Infant Homicides Within the Context of Safe Haven Laws - United States, 2008-2017. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2020 Oct 2;69(39):1385-1390. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6939a1. PMID: 33001877; PMCID: PMC7537560.
2. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66afb00c1b398675930f0e4a/t/66d8c073a99e866721202d19/1725481075477/C180100+Letter.pdf>
3. <https://socialwork.utexas.edu/projects/alternatives-to-relinquishment-of-custody-to-obtain-mental-health-services/>
4. ACOG Committee Opinion No. 736: Optimizing Postpartum Care. Obstet Gynecol. 2018 May;131(5):e140-e150. doi: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000002633. PMID: 29683911.

**Testimony to HHS Committee 2025
Vote NO on baby boxes**

Dear Mister Chairman, Madam Vice Chair and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Kathy Aderhold, and I am here to testify in opposition to HB 25-1257. I am a first mother, more commonly known as BIRTH MOTHER. But I was the FIRST mother to my daughter. She was born in 1972 and I was forced to lose her to adoption. My pregnancy was a scandal. To everyone, this was a crisis.

For decades, I have been involved in birth/first mother support groups and have seen firsthand the devastating unresolved grief of women who lost their children and are unable to find out what happened to them. Many of us were told that we would forget and move on with our lives, but we never forgot. How could we?

Before retiring, I was the nurse midwife director of a Teen Mothers Pregnancy clinic. These girls were in shock, afraid, and did not know how to proceed. I tried to take away their fear and boost their self-esteem by giving them resources where they could get assistance with parenting their child.

I counseled them that surrendering their baby for adoption had life-long effects for them and for their baby. I explained how adoption works and how open adoption is not enforced. Most of these young moms kept their babies, and out of almost 1000 teen moms, only 4 eventually surrendered.

Of course, crisis pregnancy does exist. And a very small number of fearful mothers who believe that they are alone and without resources do leave their babies at Safe Haven locations. But current law requires a face-to-face interaction with another human being - a vital provision in case the mother herself is in danger or might be able to parent her infant if connected with needed assistance. It is cruel to capitalize on that stress by giving parents the option to abandon their baby in this manner. These mothers need support and nonjudgement. They need help, not encouragement to abandon their child.

As for the myth of anonymity, I am a genetic genealogist and I can tell you that, with today's consumer access to DNA testing, it is easy to find biological parents. The truth will eventually come out.

Baby boxes originated in medieval times. In Finland, baby boxes have a different meaning. For over 80 years, every expectant mother receives a government-provided box filled with baby essentials, including clothes, bedding, and even a mattress - this is considered a key factor in Finland's low infant mortality rate.

Let's take the fear and shame away from the mothers so they don't spend the rest of their

lives hating themselves and grieving their lost children. Let's encourage parenting, not abandonment.

I urge you to vote NO on HB 25-1257. Thank you.