



**Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization**

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**TO:** Members: Colorado Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
**FROM:** Marley Greiner, Executive Chair  
**RE:** SB83 – Safe Haven Baby Box/Newborn Safety Device-- **Submitted**  
**Testimony: OPPOSE**  
**DATE:** February 20 2024

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.

In addition to being the Executive Chair and co-founder of Bastard Nation I operate the Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now website (<https://stopshbbnow.org>) that contains over 100 pages of Safe Haven Baby Box information including up-to-date legislative tracking, individual state updates, statistics, policy statements from organizations that oppose boxes, critical readings and reports, pictorials, videos, and a frequently published blog.

Bastard Nation is absolutely opposed to implementation of Safe Haven Baby Boxes/Newborn Safety Devices in Colorado. .SB83 isa bill that attacks that right of records and identity access for Colorado adoptees. This bill encourages a tiny tiny tiny number of Colorado parents to legally and anonymously abandon their newborns for adoption; thus, denying their children the right to their a genuine record of birth, biological family information, history, and social and cultural context.

This testimony is divided into two parts: (1) A short backgrounder; (2) adoptee rights and adoption reform objections.

## Background

**Definition:** “Newborn safety devices/Safe Haven Baby Boxes (SHBB) ” resemble a bank or library depository but contain temperature controls and other safety features similar to standard newborn incubators. Boxes are installed in the walls of fire stations, hospitals or other authorized locations to facilitate easy, de-personalized, “shame-free,”and legalized “anonymous abandonment” of newborns by parents (typically mothers) or in some states those designated by them under the authority of state “safe haven” laws.

The Safe Haven Baby Box movement and Safe Haven Baby Boxes, Inc was started by Monica Kelsey in Woodburn, Indiana about seven years ago. The company is a privately owned and operated not-for-profit ministry. It is the only manufacturer and leaser of the “safety devices” in the United States today. **The company is the model of Henry Ford's vertical business model. It created a “need” for its product. It works with legislators to write enabling legislation, lobbies for passage, runs its own hotline, and manufactures its own product at its factory outside of Woodburn where it employs family members,, Ms Kelsey and her husband (listed on the payroll) pull down at least \$170,00 a year and the company also employs Mrs. Kelsey's son. SHBB Inc advertises itself, (and its hotline and company information) on the outside of its devices installed on government property, making the state buildings a billboard for its services. It utilizes the children it claims to have “saved” in company advertising and events such as box blessings, press conferences, and fundraisers.**

There is no newborn/safe haven eligible discard/murder epidemic in Colorado. According to Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc's own statistics only 5 newborns have been reported discarded since 2017.

### **Selected list of organizations that oppose Safe Haven Baby Boxes:**

Bastard Nation, Adoptee Rights Law Center, Adoptees United, Missouri Open, Texas Adoptee Rights Coalition, Abrazo Adoption Associates (San Antonio),New York Adoptee Rights Coalition, Equal Access Oklahoma, Oklahoma Original Birth Certificates for All Adult Adoptees, Florida Adoption Council (Florida affiliate of the American Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys), Against Child Trafficking, Chicago Bar Association, Louisiana March of Dimes, Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, A Safe Haven for Newborns (Florida), Save Abandoned Babies, Foundation (Illinois), Indiana Department of Health, Mad Voters—Indiana, Freedom from Religion Foundation.

To make things simple I am attaching the Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now talking points sheet which I developed for use in hearings, the media,and public discussion.

Please keep Colorado's record of supporting adoptee rights in tact. Recommend DO NOT PASS on SB83/

Thank you for your consideration.

*Bastard Nation is dedicated to the recognition of the full human and civil rights of adult adoptees. Toward that end, we advocate the opening to adoptees, upon request at age of majority, of those government documents which pertain to the adopter's historical, genetic, and legal identity, including the unaltered original birth certificate and adoption decree. Bastard Nation asserts that it is the right of people everywhere to have their official original birth records unaltered and free from falsification, and that the adoptive status of any person should not prohibit him or her from choosing to exercise that right. We have reclaimed the badge of bastardy placed on us by those who would attempt to shame us; we see nothing shameful in having been born out of wedlock or in being adopted. Bastard Nation does not support mandated mutual consent registries or intermediary systems in place of unconditional open records, nor any other system that is less than access on demand to the adult adoptee, without condition, and without qualification.*

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# **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/neonaticide, 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.

## **For More Information**

**Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now**  
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