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Submitted Testimony
HB2492

Infant Safety Devices/Safe Haven Baby Box Authorization
House Judiciary—Civil Committee

March 12, 2025

OPPOSE

Submitted Testimony
by

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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.]

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. We have been active in Illinois since the late 1990s.

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.

We are not alone in our opposition to baby abandonment boxes. Not one adoptee rights, birthparent rights, and adoption reform organization in the United States supports them. Other organizations oppose as well. [Here is a list of selected opponents.](#) Although these organizations may not always agree with one another on individual issues, we agree on this:

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 heir civil and human rights to birth and adoption records, histories, context...and dignity.

We demand ethics and accountability in adoption and related childcare practices, not a box-in-a-wall—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 submitted testimony contains 3 sections (1) Our talking points sheet covering objections and concerns; most of which are rooted in the abrogation of adoptee civil rights, parental rights; and the degradation of best practice standards in adoption, foster care, child welfare, and maternal and infant healthcare the baby abandonment boxes represent. (2) a short discussion on HB24921 (3) 3 key issues outside outside of records and identity.

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
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HB24 Discussion

HB2492 is a strange convoluted, and contradictory bill. The bill starts with standard baby box language. Then it launches into a government funding scheme that takes baby abandonment boxes “where no man has gone before.” State and local authorities, using a population formula, would “identify locations” in each county to host boxes and then offer grants to help pay installation costs for those locations. No dollar amount or funding cap is included in the bill. Moreover, chosen locations would not be mandated to acquire boxes since they would be installed on a voluntary basis.

HB2492 is a vendor bill that benefits one company, Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc in Wodburn Indiana, a **multi-million-dollar ministry, that is the only source of the devices in the US.** It invented the Baby Box Movement. It 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.

SHBB Inc sells its product to lawmakers and the public by saying the acquisition of a box is a voluntary, local initiative funded not by public funds but by voluntary donations from individuals, ministries, fraternal organizations, non-profits, anti-abortion organizations, and foundations. HB2492 says just the opposite—taxpayers would pay,

Key Issues

As noted, our Talking Points sheet explains our objections rooted in bad adoption, foster care, and child welfare issues, but here are 3 key points somewhat outside of those that present bad outcomes for newborns, their mothers and fathers, and to society as a whole that need emphasis.

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.

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 mold (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.

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 its YouTube channel, 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 anonymously 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 USDA 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 multiple alarm system, are not. The SHBB Inc CEO has refused to discuss why they are not listed. ([See video here](#). *Courtesy of Chris Hicks*)

Undue Company Control of Boxes:

Each box serves as an advertisement for the box company; therefore, the company controls the signage on and around boxes. Some locations have reportee 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 sources 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.

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 shapes 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 and more money.

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. According to a

news story, a dozen boxes in San Antonio, Texas have not been installed because of the City Attorney's problems with the contract.

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 form compares poorly 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](#).

Please vote DO NOT PASS on HB2492. Thank you.