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Submitted Testimony
SB9
Infant Safety Devices/Safe Haven Baby Box Authorization
Alaska Senate Judiciary Committee
April 1, 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 Bastard Nation, the largest adoptee civil rights organization the United States. We support only full unrestricted access for all adopted persons to their original birth certificates and related adoption documents. Since 2016 we have opposed the legalization and use “newborn safety devices” aka Safe Haven Baby Boxes I am also the owner of SSHBBN, the largest baby abandonment box information. educational and media resource website in the world.

We are alarmed and saddened that the Alaska legislature is considering authorizing baby abandonment boxes so that parents (usually defined as mothers) can anonymously drop their newborn in a box in the wall and walk away.

Alaska is a pioneer in acknowledging and protecting the civil right of its adoptees to obtain their OBCs without restriction and conditions. Until 1998 it was only 1 of 2 states that acknowledged the right of its adoptees to their own birth information and refused to seal our records from us. Passage of SB9 will be a giant step backwards and a betrayal of the state's proud history of adoptee support for rights, dignity, and respect.

We urge you to vote NO SB9.

Our submitted testimony contains 3 parts:

1. Why the Adoptee Rights Movement opposes newborn safety devices/Safe Haven Baby Boxes, and why this is important.
2. Discussion of 4 issues regarding Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc, the ministry that holds a monopoly on all things baby box .These issues are the company's tight control over box operation, procedures, and public information; funding; and safety issues for mother and baby as well as the safety of the device itself. A 5th concern relates to legal protections for Alaska's indigenous population.
3. Our Talking Points easy to-follow sheet summarizing objections regarding the abrogation of adoptee civil rights, birthparent rights, informed consent, and best practice and ethics in adoption that the legalization of baby abandonment boxes represents is at the bottom of the “official” testimony.

Introduction: Why the Adoptee Rights Movement Opposes Newborn Safety Devices/Safe Haven Baby Boxes and Why this is Important

Safe Haven Baby Box advocates sound the mantra: *women demand anonymity and anonymous birth*, for vague reasons that are never explained except in terms like “mothers in crisis.” and that the boxes are the only buffer between a newborn's life and infanticide—with no proof. The “claim” reduces complex and nuanced problems to a sound byte that does nothing to address the actual causes of newborn discard.

At the same time baby box advocates claim a right to parental anonymity, adopted people throughout the US continue to be stripped of our right to government- generated and held records pertaining to ourselves and our adoptions, our identities, families and social and medical histories,. Our records in all but 15 states remain sealed one on level or the other, and under the control of state secrecy laws- enacted 60-80 years ago, and upheld by bureaucrats, judges, politicians, and 3rd party special interest groups that believe adopted people as disruptive if not dangerous,

It is no surprise that in sealed state after sealed state that these special interests such as churches and “pro-life” organizations--the very people that lobby for passage of bills like SB9 and promote and fund boxes—are the loudest and largest lobbyists against of adoptee rights to records and identity. It is not unusual for baby box bills to show up at the same time records access bills are being heard in state legislatures. Passage of box bills nail the coffin shut on adopted people, excluding us from equal treatment and rights under law.

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 be 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. 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, and there is no proof that one baby has been “saved” by a box. Boxes are simply an easy way to get rid of a problem.

Bastard Nation and SSHBBN 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.](#)

Recently the [Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University's Infant Abandonment Working Group](#) published Legislative Report: US Policy Responses to Infant Abandonment and Infanticide) download at bioethics.yale.edu/infan_abandonment) Although the report is not comprehensive, this is to my knowledge, the first study ever on the use and efficacy of “newborn safety devices.” The Center also sent an [open letter to HHS](#) supported by over 100 child welfare and maternal health scholars, clinicians, legislators and policymakers, educators, advocates, legal professionals, indigenous leaders, and concerned citizens from across the US to request increased HHS involvement in public health policy responses to crisis pregnancies and asking for oversight of the rapidly expanding network of unregulated baby abandonment boxes. (These documents and more are available at the general working group link above.)

Organizations that oppose baby abandonment boxes 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

5 Issues

Monopoly Control

SB9 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 and market, It writes bills and lobbies lawmakers, produces baby boxes at its own factory, installs the devices, trains location staff, runs a hotline that at 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.

Control of Box Operation and Practices

SHBB Inc has said publicly that each box serves as an advertisement for the box company; therefore,

the company controls the signage on and around boxes. (The signage itself, is a literal advertisement for the ministry.) Some locations have reportedly attempted to include their own signage that would direct parents to consider a traditional personal walk-in handovers. They have asked to make information sources available about medical issues mothers may experience and localized information on local medical, counseling, legal, and family services, etc, 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, banned it from the device, but suggested it could be hung on a hook or kept in some kind of container next to the box door. I believe the company is now required to include Ohio government-produced information on child welfare. I have no idea if it 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 issued an “official” statement.

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 recent news story, a dozen approved and city-allocated funded boxes in San Antonio, Texas, have not been installed because of the City Attorney's problems with the contract (see below under “Cost” for more on that).

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 through state agencies in traditional Safe Haven cases. The SHBB Inc form is held “anonymous” and as far as we know, is not available to appropriate state agencies or child placing 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 Box Babies. The company for it's own unknown purposes, seems to squirrel away personal and “private” information about babies and parents that in normal adoptions would most likely be shared. I can't find an image of such an Alaska form, but the SHBB Inc form and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services form are [found here](#).

Cost of Boxes and Funding

SHBB Inc sells its product to lawmakers and the public by saying the acquisition/lease of a box is a voluntary, local initiative funded not by public funds but by voluntary donations from individuals, ministries, churches, businesses, fraternal organizations, non-profits, anti-abortion organizations, and foundations

SHBB Inc initially operated on private donations, and still collects them. In the last couple of years, however, states and local jurisdictions have diverted taxpayer dollars to pay for them. Indiana 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 unpaid and uninstalled [due to the City Attorney's unspecified concerns about SHBB Inc company's proposed contract with the city.](#) .

Trustees at Union Township, Ohio, outside of Cincinnati, decided it was OK to outright pay the approximately \$16,000 lease fee and other costs in their entirety with taxpayer money, not donations. When local pro-life 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. Hicks cried foul! He continued his investigation, chronicling it on Facebook and YouTube. Not to be beaten, the over-spending trustees dug in and hired 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 for an extra full-time firefighter at union scale with benefits Hicks reported his findings (which included other violations of Ohio law regarding maintenance and sanitation) to the Ohio Public Health Review Board, His documented report led to the Ohio Department of Health shutting down our-of-compliance boxes until problems were fixed. (See below for more safety issues.)

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

Through various 990s posted online we have documented close to \$2 million in state and local taxpayer funded allocations for boxes (there is probably more) for a “service” that is publicized being free of public funding and paid for by voluntary contributions.

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 “crisis pregnancies” to undergo dangerous and unsafe unattended births and care outside of a medical and safe setting.

Unsafe Pregnancy and Birth Practices: SHBB Inc claims that it suggests its callers seek medical and counseling services pre- and postnatal care, safe delivery, financial assistance, etc, **but its 9 minute video (deceptively called a Public Service Announcement) with 27K views on its YouTube channel, is a step-by-step guide, targeting teenage girls, on how to keep pregnancy, and childbirth concealed--a secret.** The video panders to the weird idea that secret pregnancy, is physically and emotionally easy to pull off, and unattended childbirth is pristine, uncomplicated and safe. We have shown this video to professionals in OB care and child welfare, and they have been horrified by this message. Those who follow its guidance of the video could die. Their babies could die.

According to SHBB Inc, the youngest mother they have guided anonymously to the box was 12. Would you want your 12-year old daughter or granddaughter, or sister, or neighbor to follow this video's teaching?

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

Advocates routinely claim that babies delivered into boxes are "healthy and well cared for," contradicting their "fact" that their mothers would have killed them without the box option. We know, however, of 2 cases (there may be more) where babies were publically announced "healthy" and weren't and another case involving a dead baby.

- In 2022 a baby girl boxed in [Hammond, Indiana](#) had a stroke either during or shortly after birth and reportedly may suffer lifelong neurological problems.

- Last year a baby boy left in [Belen, New Mexico](#) was immediately admitted to the local neonate ICU suffering from pneumonia and hypothermia, and was hospitalized for a month.
- Last year in [Idaho](#) an 18-year old mother left her deceased newborn in a box.

Baby boxes are unregulated. The USDA does not consider boxes to be medical devices, Furthermore, they **are not tested by Underwriters Laboratory; thus, not UL certified.**

According to the [Quality Inspection.org](#) website, equipment that should have UL certification includes (1) Electrical and electronic equipment (appliances, power supplies, etc.) and (2) Alarm signaling devices (smoke detectors, fire suppression and alarm monitoring). **This means that your microwave, TV, the nightstand lamp, and even your power cords should be UL compliant, but electrically-operated baby boxes that contain a multiple alarm system, are not.**

Importantly, manufacturers of electrical devices that are not certified and 3rd parties that utilize them—in the case of baby boxes, the state, locations and municipalities that authorize their use--could be held liable for death, personal injuries, or property damage caused by non-complaint devices.

Recently the SHBB Inc CEO said that getting UL certification is expensive and they have been working on getting it for 2 years. According to the Quality Inspection site, “A small and simple product could cost between \$2-5k, requiring several samples per test, and take about 3-4 weeks to complete the testing.” More complex products can cost more \$50k and take over a month. SHBB Inc's published 990s indicate the company can well afford certification.

ICWA

SB9 now includes tribal health centers as box locations , but I want to bring up that the bill might undermine portions of ICWA and various legal protections for Alaska's indigenous population. Just a couple of weeks ago the New Mexico Senate resoundingly rejected the 5th attempt to pass a bill similar to SB9 due to concerns the legislation abrogated the protections of the state's Indian population under the federal Indian Child Welfare Act and the [New Mexico Indian Family Protection Act](#). The defeat was spearheaded by tribal leaders and Indian legal, and social services organizations.

Conclusion

Safe Haven Baby Box adoption by law and policy creates and promotes unethical and deceptive child relinquishment and general child welfare practices, Rooted in shame and secrecy, the legalization of baby abandonment boxes denies due process, the parental rights of non-relinquishment parents, and possibly custody and placement rights of Alaska's indigenous and tribal populations. Under baby box rule adults stuck in boxes as newborns will be denied the civil right to access to their own birth records and history—a right that the State of Alaska has always guaranteed. Boxes and their promotion send a message that concealed pregnancy and birth is safe when in fact, these secrets can harm and even kill newborns and mothers.

Newborn safety devices/Safe Haven Baby Boxes fail to address the root causes of newborn discard. The Alaska government should be promoting best practice standards in maternal and child care to address the issue, not dysfunctional and dangers schemes that turn solutions to complex problems into legal no-fuss-no muss baby abandonment.

Please vote DO NOT PASS on SB9! Thank you!

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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