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April 27, 2015

Robin Heise
Records Manager/Archivist
Greene County Records Center and Archives
535 Ledbetter Road, Xenia, OH 45385

Dear Ms. Heise:

Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) is writing this letter to state that we fully support the Greene County Archivists and Records Managers Association's (CARMA) to amend the ORC 149.43 so to lift any access restrictions on those records scheduled for *permanent* retention, 100 years after the data the record is finalized and closed.

PCSAO is a member-driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies and supports the County Archivists and Records Managers Association (CARMA) Legislative Committee's effort in order to provide the public with access to important historical information, which is currently unavailable. The relevant records include: Adoptions (this restriction was just lifted by advocacy efforts), Lunacy, County Home Registers, Children's Home Registers, Juvenile Court Cases, Witness Dockets, Inheritance Tax, and Veterans' Relief.

PCSAO agrees that these records are important as they provide valuable insight into our collective history as a state, as a society, and as families. Research of these records is requested by historians and genealogists, both professionals and family history practitioners, for a variety of reasons. The National Genealogical Society recently initiated a Declaration of Rights advocating for access to federal, state, and local government records, indicating that thousands of professional genealogists do research every day on behalf of clients, government agencies, and attorneys.

Thank you for your advocacy and efforts to seek such an amendment to the ORC. PCSAO supports these efforts and is available to provide any assistance to the CARMA.

Sincerely,

Angela Sausser, MSW, MA, LSW
Executive Director



OHIO HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD

CARMA Legislative Committee
c/o Robin Heise
Records Manager/Archivist
535 Ledbetter Road
Xenia, OH 45385

Dear Ms. Heise,

The Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) enthusiastically supports House Bill 139 (Eliminate public records exemption if record 100 years old). OHRAB is the central body for historical records planning in the State of Ohio. Therefore, HB 139 falls right in line with OHRAB's mission to nurture and advise programs that identify, preserve, and provide access to the documentary heritage which enriches culture and protects the rights of Ohioans.

On a daily basis, records custodians have to balance the responsibility of protecting private information, while still providing access to important aspects of the significant historical information contained within the records. Current permanent restrictions are an impediment to records being used to their fullest potential. Rules protecting the privacy of those mentioned in the records rarely take into account the historical nature and uses of records from preceding centuries. How can we learn from the past if we don't have access to it?

Setting a standard time period for removing all restrictions to these records would allow the records to be used to their full historical research potential, while protecting a living individual from infringement on personally identifying information. A few examples of records opened after time has passed:

- Federal Census Records – opened after 72 years
- Mental Illness – 50 years after patient death (ORC 5122.31(A)(14))
- Veterans' Discharge – 75 years (ORC 317.24(B)(2)(a))

The labeling and treatment of "normal" behaviors continues to evolve. Conditions and behaviors for which people were once institutionalized or had a social stigma attached are now integrated into society as much as possible. Things that people didn't talk much about are now common. The stigma associated lessens over time. Access to the records can clear up rumors and replace them with facts.

Additionally, there is a wealth of information, not just about individuals, but about cultural and societal response to various conditions or incidents or about the prevalence of various conditions within populations.

HB 139 would accomplish both the protection of privacy for living individuals while also providing a reasonable level of access to Ohio's archival resources.

Sincerely,

Pari J. Swift, Chair, OHRAB

Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board
C/O Ohio Historical Society State Archives
800 E. 17th Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43211
614-297-2536
statearchives@ohiohistory.org



March 17, 2017

Ms. Robin Heise
Records Manager/Archivist
Greene County Records Center and Archives
535 Ledbetter Road
Xenia, Ohio 45385

Dear Ms. Heise:

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of the County Archivists and Records Managers Association's (CARMA) proposal to lift access restrictions to closed historical records after 100 years. The Ohio History Connection, as the State Archives, works with government offices to preserve and provide access to records of historical value. Currently there are a number of historical records, such as adoption files, children's home registers and veterans' relief records that are either permanently closed or accessible only by permission of the Probate Court Judge. These documents, which can be found in the State Archives, county archives, and other repositories across the state, contain a wealth of significant historical information on Ohio's citizens as well as the collective history of our local communities and our state. The information found in these records can be useful not only for connecting to one's family but can be important for medical reasons as well.

Opening these records 100 years after they are created, as proposed by CARMA, would protect the sensitive information during the individuals' lifetimes while providing access to future genealogists, historians and other researchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fred Previts".

Fred Previts
State Archivist
Ohio History Connection

Ohio History Connection
State Archives
800 E. 17th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43211-2497
ph: 614.297-2553 fx: 614.297.2546
www.ohiohistory.org



Wednesday, March 29, 2017

CARMA Legislative Committee
C/o Ms. Robin Heise
Records Manager/Archivist
Greene County Records Center and Archives
535 Ledbetter Road
Xenia, OH 45385

Dear Ms. Heise,

On behalf of the Society of Ohio Archivists, I am writing to convey our support for the 132nd General Assembly – Regular Session 2017 – 2018, House Bill number 139; an amendment to the Ohio Revised Code 149.43 to eliminate the public disclosure exemption for any permanently retained record 100 years after the date of its creation.

Records affected by the current legislation, such as adoptions, inheritance tax and veterans' relief, are regularly requested by historians and genealogists, both professionals and family history practitioners, for a variety of reasons. Under the current legislation, records that are openly accessible in one county Probate Court may not be accessible in another. This irregularity in records availability can be frustrating for researchers and may lead to inconsistent research findings.

Eliminating the public disclosure exemption would build upon the open access legislation passed by the Ohio General Assembly in 2015 to open confidential records of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services fifty years after the patient's death. It would also align with federal policies and similar open access legislation in states around the country.

Overall, we believe that eliminating the public disclosure exemption to provide access to records will lend valuable insight into our collective history as a state, as a society, and as families.

Sincerely,

Jillian Carney
President
Society of Ohio Archivists



Changing Lives. Creating Futures

Founded in 1988

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Betsie Norris
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 18, 2017

Todd Kleismit
Director of Community and Government Relations
Ohio History Connection
800 E. 17th Ave.
Columbus, OH 43211

Dear Mr. Kleismit:

On behalf of the Adoption Network Cleveland, I am writing to offer my organization's support for proposed legislation to open adoption records and other public documents that are 100 years old and over.

As a professional in the adoption field for 30 years, I know first-hand the value these documents hold for adoptees and their family members. In addition to the genealogical value they offer, the documents oftentimes hold the key to valuable medical information that is necessary for adoptees and their descendants as they piece together their medical history.

Additionally, because the documents pertain to deceased individuals, Adoption Network Cleveland does not believe opening them up to the public presents any privacy issues. Having worked on recent legislation to make birth records accessible to adult adoptees, I would think there would be little opposition to this law change.

Again, please accept Adoption Network Cleveland's support for this legislative effort, and let us know how we can augment your efforts for securing its passage.

Sincerely,

Betsie Norris
Executive Director