



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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April 4, 2007

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I'm here to testify in favor of SB 844, AAC Concerning Missing Persons and the Duties of the Chief Medical Examiner. I'd like to thank the committee for raising this bill, which seeks to address the limitations in current statutes regarding missing adults. I first learned about this issue from my constituent Janice Smolinski whose son Billy has been missing for 2 1/2 years. As a mother I listened intently to her story and marveled at how she turned her sorrow into a cause for action. Janice has decided that no other parent should have to go through the pain and sorrow she has.

Through our conversation and my follow up, it became clear to me that we needed a state protocol for missing adults that is uniform for all law enforcement agencies. Currently it is left to local officials and varies from town to town. Additional training is needed for law enforcement officials in how to handle missing person's cases. Law enforcement officials also need to contact the chief medical examiner's office more promptly when a person is reported missing so that possible identification could be made.

In response to her request, I submitted HB 5273, which passed on consent in the Public Safety Committee and will also be coming before your committee.

The bill before you today, SB 844, is very similar to that bill. Both bills:

- Require law enforcement agencies to accept missing persons reports without delay
- Proscribe what information is to be collected on the missing person
- Define the procedure for notifying the family and the information given to them
- Define high risk missing persons
- Require that state police be notified in a high risk missing person case
- Require state police to enter collected data into federal databases
- Require training of local enforcement officials in missing persons protocols

- Define the responsibility to contact the Chief Medical Examiner
- Define the procedures he or she must follow in missing person cases.

There are three major differences between the two bills:

- Line 109 in 844 gives 30 days to obtain DNA samples instead of 72 hours. Seventy two hours would be preferable.
- Line 249 states that the chief medical examiner shall make reasonable efforts to obtain prompt DNA analysis. HB 5273 deletes the words make reasonable efforts.
- HB 5273 has language regarding defacing or removing a missing person's poster.

Both bills need language that address the role of canine search and rescue in missing person's cases.

It is my hope that the committee will be able to combine the language of both bills and favorably report out a missing person's bill.

To a parent it does not matter whether the missing person is an adult or a child. All that matters is that their child is missing. The Smolinski family has been part of a national effort to change state laws regarding missing persons. Connecticut must be a part of that effort – for Janice Smolinski and for all families.