



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE February 26, 2007

Meg Hooper, Chief, Planning Branch, Office of Vital Records, 860-509-7218

Senate Bill 1190 - An Act Concerning Vital Records

The Department of Public Health supports Senate Bill 1190 in part. We are opposed to certain sections of the bill. The Department supports sections 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 of the bill. The Department opposes sections 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 14.

Section 1 of the bill proposes that a criminal history records check be conducted on all persons applying for employment in the State Vital Records Office. The Department strongly supports this measure for several reasons:

- The Department will be better able to secure vital records by knowing the criminal history of a potential employee, and preventing the hiring of an individual with an inappropriate criminal past. The security of vital records is essential because the theft of a birth certificate, or the supplies to fabricate one, can assist law breaking individuals in creating false identities. With a birth certificate that appears valid on its face, other identifying documents such as a driver's license or passport can be obtained. Such fraud has implications for national security, imposter fraud, as well as on the increasing incidents of identity theft.
- It will allow the State Vital Records Office to conform to the regulations proposed by the US Department of Health and Human Services to implement the 2004 federal Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act.

The Department also supports Sections 2 and 9 which allow a nurse midwife who has delivered a fetus born dead, to sign the fetal death certificate, as well as the technical changes made in sections 5, 10, 11, 12, and 13 of the bill, that clarify existing statutes.

The Department does not support the changes made in sections 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8. The bill would give funeral directors the option of filing a death certificate either in the town where death occurred or in the town where the funeral home that is carrying out the disposal of the body is located. With an option of where to file the death certificate, the State's efforts to track a death certificate that is missing or improperly filed will become more problematic. Under current law when the State Vital Records Office learns that a death certificate is missing, we are able to track it down more readily because we know with certainty where the death certificate was supposed to be filed – at the town where death occurred. Under this proposal, the State Vital Records Office will no longer know where the death certificate is originally filed, and with which of the 169 towns to follow-up. For this essential reason – the inability of the State Vital Records Office to track down missing death certificates – we oppose this measure. Furthermore, the Department will incur costs to carry out this measure. The Department's data system, the DPH data entry vendor, and the death certificate will need to be updated to capture the town of filing.

Phone:



Telephone Device for the Deaf: (860) 509-7191

410 Capitol Avenue - MS # _____

P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134

Affirmative Action / An Equal Opportunity Employer

In addition to our concerns about the overall objective of the bill, we would also like to address a few technical issues:

- Section 3(a) requires the registrar of the town where the funeral home is located to send a copy of the record to the town of occurrence. The language is not clear about which town is responsible for sending a copy of the record to the State Vital Records Office.
- The use of the term “originated” as used in the new language of section 6, 7, and 8 of the bill is unclear. The language is being changed from “the town in which the vital event [occurred]” to “the town in which the vital event originated.” This use of the term “originated” is intended to capture both situations – certificates that are filed at the town of death and certificates that are filed at the town where the funeral director is located. We believe that the term “originated” does not effectively convey the intended meaning.
- In section 8 of the bill, a comma should be inserted as follows:
 - “If death occurred in this state, the death certificate required by law shall be filed with the registrar of vital statistics for the town in which such person died, if known, or, if not known, for the town in which the body was found, or the town in which the funeral home having charge of the body is located.”Without the comma, the language can be interpreted to allow the death certificate to be filed at the town of the funeral home’s location ONLY when the town of death is not known. Since the intent of the bill is to allow the filing of the death certificate at the town of the funeral home’s location regardless of whether or not the town of death is known, the comma needs to be added.
- Language needs to be added to the bill to make it clear that a funeral home with several locations, or a corporate headquarter, does not have the option of filing the death certificate in any of the towns that it operates, but only in the town of the funeral home that handles and prepares the body for disposal.

Lastly, the Department is opposed to section 14 of the bill which authorizes the Commissioner of Public Health to amend birth certificates when sufficient documentary evidence is provided. We oppose this because it is unnecessary. Current statutes and regulations already provide such authority to the Commissioner as well as to all the local registrars.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department’s views on this bill.