

**Amber Alert Safe Child Committee**  
**80 Squire Lane**  
**Hamden, CT 06518**

**House Bill 6825, An Act Concerning Liability for Services Related to Identification of Missing and Abducted Children**

**Judiciary Committee**  
**March 16, 2007**

**Submitted by: Ronald C. Osach, Chairman of the Amber Alert Safe Child Committee**

My name is Ron Osach. I am Chairman of the Amber Alert Safe Child Committee, based in Hamden, and I am testifying on behalf of the organization.

The Amber Alert Safe Child Committee supports House Bill 6825, An Act Concerning Liability for Services Related to Identification of Missing and Abducted Children, and, on behalf of the organization, I would like to thank the committee for voting to draft the committee bill before you today. I would also like to thank Rep. Brendan Sharkey of Hamden for sponsoring the proposed bill and supporting the concept underlying the legislation.

On May 13, 2004, at a news conference at the Connecticut Department of Public Safety, then Lieutenant Governor M. Jodi Rell, along with the Commissioner of Public Safety and various representatives of the State Police, announced the formation of the Connecticut Amber Alert Child ID Program (the "Program") and the Connecticut Amber Alert Database. Lieutenant Governor Rell proudly noted that Connecticut was the first State in the nation to adopt such a Program.

The purpose of the Program is to compile photographs and detailed personal identifying information of children. Once collected, this data is then loaded onto a computer database currently located at the Connecticut Department of Public Safety. In the event of an Amber Alert, law enforcement can quickly access the database and retrieve a child's photograph and description, which is then disseminated to the news media and the public. In this manner, the public immediately becomes the ears and eyes of law enforcement and can assist in the search for the missing child. Though the Program is State sponsored, participation in the Program comes from individual volunteers and volunteer organizations.

By way of background, the Amber Alert System is an emergency broadcast system, mandated by federal legislation under the National Amber Alert Network Act of 2003. Each state has its own Amber Alert program and Connecticut's is administered by the Department of Public Safety for the purpose of instantly notifying the entire state of a

missing or abducted child so that everyone may assist in the search for the child's safe return. Once law enforcement responds to the scene and obtains a description of the child, abductor and vehicle, this information is immediately reported to the Connecticut State Police Message Center and recorded on an audio Alert Message. The emergency message is immediately broadcast to all radio and television stations across the state through the Emergency Alert System, the same alert used during severe weather emergencies. It is a valuable resource that has worked successfully in Connecticut and other states.

The Amber Alert Safe Child Committee is a nonprofit organization of volunteers who work on the Program through the State of Connecticut Amber Alert Committee, under a Memorandum of Understanding.

HB 6825 would promote the Program by encouraging volunteer participation by providing a limited measure of immunity from liability for individuals and organizations for any claims resulting from activities related to registering, photographing and compiling descriptions of children for inclusion in the State of Connecticut Amber Alert Child ID database. The bill is essential to attract and retain dedicated volunteer members who might fear exposure to liability for their activities that are designed to find missing children.

In 2003, the legislature adopted the law, Conn. Gen. Stat. §52-557q, providing immunity from liability for broadcasters, such as radio stations, that publicize an AMBER alert. Two years ago, the legislature provided immunity under the statute for outdoor advertising establishments, such as billboard companies. The amendment proposed in House Bill 6825 is a limited, logical extension of the law and therefore should be approved. The bill would further the public policy of the state of protecting vulnerable children by helping to identify them and facilitate their immediate recovery during the most critical early stages of an abduction. Providing this limited measure of immunity to dedicated persons who are volunteering their time and resources will only help in this regard.