

RAISED BILL NO. 5926

VALERIE GEREMIA: PHONE 203-376-0257, WORK 203-882-3351
EMAIL: VALERIEG1@JUNO.COM, VALERIE@DEYSMITH.COM

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Committee; my name is Valerie Geremia and I am here on behalf of myself and Rob Backhaus in support of Bill No. 5926, Certificates of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth.

I knew something was wrong with my pregnancy when our baby girl stopped kicking. She had always been active, always moving. An ultrasound confirmed that our daughter, Natalie Margaret Backhaus, had died. It was August 31, 2006 and I was 32 weeks pregnant, roughly 8 months. I gave birth to my first and only child who was 3lbs, 10oz., 16" long. The baby we planned for, waited for and hoped for, was stillborn.

I called the Town Clerk's Office and was told there was a birth certificate and it listed "fetal death" as the cause. Imagine my surprise when I actually received a Certificate of Fetal Death. I had nearly died after delivering my daughter and had just buried her, and now I was left with no acknowledgement that I ever gave birth to a child. I delivered Natalie and when it was over, I got to hold her, just like the mothers of live babies do. Then, I had to give her back and go home to an empty nursery.

In this State, the mother of a live birth is issued a "Certificate of Live Birth." Why wouldn't a "Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth" be given to the mother of a stillborn? Through policy NOT statute, the Department of Public Health currently offers a "Certificate of Stillbirth" as a commemorative document. This current certificate does not include the important words "Certificate of Birth" in the title; as these words are critical for affirming that a woman successfully gave birth, regardless of whether that baby was living or deceased at the time of delivery. The "Certificate of Stillbirth" is simply another death certificate. Parents of stillborn babies already have a death certificate.

Members of the Committee, there is no "agenda" here. This is not an abortion issue, however, this is a right to choose issue. A Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth is an optional document issued upon request of a parent. Shouldn't I, the mother of a stillborn baby, have the right to make my choice to request this certificate, should I want one? Isn't that my right to choose? We are not asking for "personhood," we are asking for a birth certificate; dignity and validation for our stillborn babies delivered at or near full term.

Twenty-one other states have passed this legislation. I am asking you to support this bill to help make Connecticut number twenty-two. Our Connecticut families of waited long enough.

Birth is a PROCESS. Life or death is the OUTCOME.
Don't deny the PROCESS.