



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### **TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE March 16, 2009**

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### **House Bill 6678 - An Act Concerning Revisions to Department of Public Health Licensing Statutes**

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The Department of Public Health supports House Bill 6678 and thanks the Committee for raising this important bill.

#### **Sections 1, 13, 19, and 21**

Address issues related to the funeral service industry. The Department respectfully requests the opportunity to submit revised language to clarify the provisions of Section 19, which would authorize schools of mortuary science to install working preparation embalming rooms for the purpose of providing students with practical instruction in embalming. In addition, we would appreciate the opportunity to work with the Committee on language that would address issues related to Section 21, which would require that any body that will not reach its final disposition or destination within forty-eight hours from the time of death must be embalmed unless it is contrary to the religious beliefs of the deceased person or the body is stored in a climate controlled room.

#### **Sections 2, 3, 4 and 18**

Make technical revisions concerning the Department's authority to take appropriate disciplinary action against certain practitioners, the definition of "public health facility" as related to the provision of dental services, and existing mandatory continuing education requirements for physicians.

#### **Sections 5 and 6**

With any mass gathering it is critically important to include the local emergency medical services primary service area responder into the planning stage of the event. If there is not a primary service area responder, then the provider of local emergency medical care and transport service must be consulted in the planning stage. This would assure that proper access and egress to the event site is identified and can be maintained in the even of medical emergency. This would also allow the local and mutual aid emergency medical services to plan and "gear up" as necessary to assure that day-to-day operations are met as well as the needs of the mass gathering event are properly addressed,

#### **Section 7**

The current Connecticut statutes lack authorizing language for the Connecticut Tumor Registry to address the failure of healthcare providers to provide access to appropriate records to the registry. Current statutes reflect reporting practices and guidelines that are not in current practice. The proposed changes would update the reporting statutes to reflect current practice. In addition, changes to the statute allow for flexibility with reporting requirements, which change over time due to changes in diagnosis, treatment and prognostic considerations in oncology.

To ensure complete and timely surveillance of cancer incidence in the State of Connecticut, revisions to the statutes would provide the Department authority to enforce reporting deadlines. The Department respectfully requests the opportunity to submit amended language to clarify the provisions of Section 7.



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### **Section 8**

Requires health care providers in many settings to wear clear and visible identification badges.

### **Sections 10 and 11**

Establish mandatory continuing education requirements for licensed veterinarians. The Department respectfully requests the opportunity to submit amended language to clarify the provisions of Section 10.

### **Section 12**

The language in section 12 will allow a subregistrar to issue cremation permits during the hours when the office of vital records is closed or in the event of a state of emergency declared by the government. Presently, subregistrars are only permitted to issue burial permits. The purpose of this proposal is to eliminate delays in cremation based upon the unavailability of the registrar to issue the cremation permit. This proposal will resolve that issue, but at the same time eliminates the checks and balances in the system to better ensure that persons responsible for disposition of bodies properly carry out their duties. In order to keep the checks and balances in the system, while at the same time resolving the issue of delaying cremation, the Department respectfully requests the opportunity to submit amended language to clarify the provisions of Section 12.

### **Sections 14 and 15**

Clarify provisions related to transporting patients between licensed health care institutions. The Department has worked closely with providers concerning these requirements and respectfully requests the opportunity to submit amended language to clarify the provisions of these sections.

### **Section 16**

Subsection (a) of Section 19a-493 is being revised, but the new language regarding frequency of inspections of home health care agencies needs to be clarified. Only home health care agencies can qualify for Medicare reimbursement. Homemaker-home health aide agencies [subsection (e) of 19a-490] and homemaker-home health aide services [subsection (f)] do not qualify for Medicare benefits. Additionally if the purpose of the language is to provide for state licensure inspections every three years for home health care agencies that participate in Title 18 perhaps the language could be simplified.

### **Section 17**

Would require the Department of Higher Education (DHE) to seek certification from the Department of Public Health (DPH) prior to authorizing an educational institution to offer a program related to a health care profession and would prohibit DHE from approving such program if the profession is not licensed, certified or registered by DPH. All health care professions, however, do not require DPH licensure, certification or registration. DPH would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee and DHE to address the issues that lead to the proposed language.

### **Section 20**

Requires sextons to return a copy of all removal transit burial permits to the town of death within 30 days after final disposition, and that the local registrar shall attach such permit to the death certificate. It also requires that language be added to the burial permit. Some of these provisions were already added in last year's legislative session under Public Act 08-184. This section includes new language for the 30-day time frame and the requirement that the burial permit be attached to the death record. **The Department is in support of the provision to send a copy of the burial permit to the town of death within the 30-day time frame.** However, Local registrars oppose the requirement to actually attach the permit to the death certificate, as this interferes with their filing systems.

Though the amendments to section 7-66 as proposed in this bill provide little change to the statute, we are in agreement that this statute, as well as other death statutes are in need of revision and clarification. The Department respectfully requests the opportunity to submit amended language for section 20 to clarify the duties of the sextons and to ensure that the sexton follows parallel procedures when completing and filing disinterment permits.

**Section 23**

Allows the Department of Public Health in concurrence with the Departments of Consumer Protection and Environmental Protection to issue a variance to the regulations of Connecticut State Agencies to an institution of higher education for the installation and study of standing column geothermal wells. The Department is supportive of this initiative however we suggest amending the bill to delete "In New Haven" in order to make this a state-wide effort.

In addition, the Department would like to amend this bill by submitting language that would make revisions to the statutes pertaining to the Office of Emergency Medical Services. Changes would include replacing outdated language with modern terminologies, allowing the Commissioner to annually approve a list that sets the minimum equipment requirements for ambulances, motorcycles and other rescue vehicles. Other changes include making the renewal cycle for EMT certification consistent for all providers, regardless of how long the provider has been certified.

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