Jody-Ann Ashielfie
(646)260-8388
ashielfiejodyann@yahoo.com

February 28, 2012

Re: Governor's H.B. No. 5027 – 'An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget recommendations Concerning the Elimination, Consolidation and Modification of Various Boards and Commissions'

Chairman Slossberg, Chairman Morin, and all members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Jody-Ashielfie. I am a Licensed Shorthand Reporter #SHR 502 working here in Connecticut. Through the Connecticut Court Reporters Association, it has recently come to my attention that Governor Malloy is proposing to eliminate the board that oversees our licensure.

Per the request of the CCRA, I am writing to you to **vehemently oppose the termination or elimination of the State Board of Examiners of Shorthand Reporters** established under Section 20-651 of the Connecticut General Statutes for the following reasons:

The Board of Examiners plays a vital role in overseeing our profession in CT under the present law. It holds hearings on complaints it receives from the public and other shorthand reporters. The Board's very existence not only acts as a deterrent for out-of-state, unlicensed interlopers taking away Connecticut jobs, but the fact that three of the Board members are actual reporters themselves ensures that awareness of any such issues are brought to light and remedied immediately, since we are a tight-knit professional community.

In conjunction with the CT Court Reporters Association, the Board also oversees the procedure for the administration of the state licensure exam, which takes place quarterly. It makes certain that that our exam is comparable to other states' exams and the exams and high standards set by the National Court Reporters Association; thereby assuring that our exam is a reasonable assessment of the abilities of the candidates' reporting skills. In order to become licensed, a reporter must first undergo rigorous training, pass the all-day, four-part state or national exam and fees associated, pay the licensing fee, and then must obtain the set 30 hours of Continuing Education hours per cycle in order to maintain said license.

The Board and the CCRA work in unity to address any potential unethical conduct or anything that stands to compromise the promotion of the high standards set forth in the regulations governing the freelance reporting community in Connecticut, who are responsible for creating a verbatim record of a number of proceedings that impact the many different parties involved in legal matters at the many different judicial levels and otherwise.

The Board and the CCRA worked intimately over the years in order to finally implement penalty legislation that now provides the Board the power to impose, under said disciplinary provisions, significant financial penalties for acts of misconduct not only by the individual reporters, but by any agency who may not necessarily need to be licensed themselves but sends the unlicensed reporter out to cover work, and it recently exercised that power in 2010 on a New York firm.

In this economy, many individuals are worried about job security and, like the State, financial stability. If unlicensed reporters come into Connecticut, they not only are stealing the work from the CT licensed reporters, but also may be less inclined to pay the different fees and taxes associated with that to the State. The Board's very presence, but especially with the three reporter members' involvement, has the ability to thwart that type activity, thereby sustaining a much-needed sense of "job security" and financial stability to the CT licensed freelance reporter.

And finally, with respect to the State's budgetary concerns, I believe that this Board is self-sustaining, in that with the licensure renewals alone, some $50,000+ every three years to the State, it more than pays for itself. This is an all-volunteer board whose members may receive some very minor remuneration for mileage, perhaps only equal to around $200 per year; and, in my very humble opinion, a very small price to pay for not only the peace of mind and protection of the profession it oversees, but for the consumer to which we provide a vital service.

Sincerely,

CT Shorthand Reporter License #SHR 502

cc: Kate Shea, Committee Clerk @ gaemail@cga.ct.gov