



Tracy L. Gow, RPR, LSR #255, President
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TESTIMONY - HEARING MARCH 2, 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:

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you to be heard on this matter.

My name is Tracy Gow. I have been working in the court reporting profession here in CT for 16 years, 14 of which have been as CT Licensed Shorthand Reporter # 255. I have been a member of the CT Court Reporters Association (CCRA) Executive Committee since 2006, having served as its vice president for one year until last October when I was elected its current president. I have also served from 2006 to present as Chief Examiner for our state licensing exam.

I am here to **vehemently oppose the 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 ("the Board") plays a vital role in overseeing our profession in CT under the present law. Its implementation and continued existence is crucial to the preservation of the continued integrity and future prosperity of the profession as we know it today.

Shorthand reporters are responsible for creating a verbatim record of a variety of proceedings -- hearings, arbitrations, depositions -- all of which impact a multitude of parties involved in the diverse legal matters at the different judicial levels and otherwise, and therefore, should be held to the highest of standards.

In order to become licensed, a shorthand reporter must first undergo rigorous training; pay the fees for and pass the all-day, four-part state exam; pay the licensing fee; and then must obtain the set 30 hours of Continuing Education per cycle in order to maintain said license.

The CCRA and the Board are intimately related, in that much of the drive, purpose and functionality of each is contingent upon the other's existence. The CCRA and the Board have worked in unison on a number of issues since the Board's implementation; most recently in a successful effort to implement penalty legislation, giving the Board the power to impose significant financial penalties for certain acts of misconduct, and it recently exercised that power in 2010 on a New York firm.

The Board holds hearings on complaints it receives from the public and other shorthand reporters; it acts as a deterrent for out-of-state, unlicensed intruders taking away Connecticut jobs; the fact that three of the six all-voluntary Board members are actual shorthand reporters themselves ensures that awareness of issues in the profession is high, and therefore, brought to light and remedied immediately, as we are a close-knit professional community; it imposes penalties on the reporter and/or agencies, licensed or not, on behalf of other reporters and/or the consumer; and in conjunction with the CCRA, the Board oversees the procedure for the administration of the state licensure exam;

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.

Finally, with respect to the State's budgetary concerns, there are two pivotal reasons that the Board should be kept in place:

One, the 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;

Second, and probably the most pertinent to the State's budgetary agenda, the Board is a catalyst to much of the drive and purpose of the CCRA. Without the Board's existence, the CCRA may become defunct, thereby placing all the responsibility of and the cost of the state licensing exam back on the State. The cost to the Association per year can be upwards of \$3,000, perhaps, when all factors are considered.

So the bottom line is, not only is the Board above and beyond self-sustaining, but it will actually COST the State MORE to abolish it, which I'm sure is not the intent behind the reason for considering its elimination. And with all that said, I would respectfully request that this Committee exercise its power to do all it can to keep our Board in place.

Respectfully submitted,
Tracy L. Gow, RPR, LSR #255
CCRA President