



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

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### **Senate Bill # 296 – AN ACT PROVIDING CERTAIN ADULT ADOPTED PERSONS WITH ACCESS TO PARENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION AND INFORMATION IN THEIR ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE**

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The Department of Public Health opposes Senate bill No. 296.

This bill authorizes the Department of Public Health to release a copy of the original birth certificate of a person adopted on or after October 1, 2013, upon request of such person after reaching the age of 21, or other authorized applicant if such person is deceased. The proposal also gives the Department new responsibilities:

- The Department will be required to furnish, collect, maintain, and issue Contact Preference forms, the form that allows a biological parent to state his or her preference about being contacted by the adult adoptee.
- The Department will be required to furnish, collect, maintain, and issue Health History forms related to the biological parents
- The Department will be required to issue quarterly reports regarding the usage of the Contact Preference forms, whether or not biological parents are consenting to contact with their biological child, and how many original birth certificates are requested.

The Department opposes this bill for several reasons. First and foremost, this proposal adds responsibilities to the Department that are beyond the scope of its mission. The vital records section of the Department of Public Health is responsible for collecting and maintaining birth, marriage, and death data. It has no involvement in the adoption process except that when someone is adopted, the department will remove the original birth certificate from the active registry and replace it with a certificate that reflects the adoption information. It is merely a clerical function, with no other responsibilities regarding adoptions. In contrast, this proposal entangles the department into aspects of the adoption process that it is ill-equipped to handle. Working with parents who have had children removed from their care, either voluntarily or involuntarily, requires a certain skill set that Vital Records staff do not possess. It would be more

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effective to retain these functions with DCF, the agency that is already responsible for handling these functions through the State Adoption Registry that among other obligations, deals with reuniting adoptees with their biological parents.

Additionally, the fiscal impact of the bill will be significant. Adoption records are maintained off-site so obtaining these records involves considerable cost – car usage fees as well as staff time. Even more costly is the added administrative burdens related to the Contact Preference form and the Health History form. Staff time will be needed to distribute, collect, maintain, and issue these forms. As well, the quarterly reporting requirements will also add costs. In addition to all these costs, the current draft of the bill does not include a provision to collect a fee for copies of the original birth records, so the Department will be required to issue thousands of records without the authority to collect a fee.

Another issue with the proposal is that it allows the original birth record to be released to “authorized applicants” as defined by §45a-743(3), when the adopted person is deceased. The definition of “authorized applicant” is very broad, and includes parties that are not eligible to receive birth records of persons who are not adopted. (See C.G.S. §7-51(a)) For instance, under this proposal, “any adult descendant”, would be entitled access to the original birth certificate, whereas for birth certificates of persons who have not been adopted, only a few eligible parties are entitled access to the birth record. The Department recommends that providing access to “authorized applicants” be given further consideration, allowing only those as defined in 7-51(a), or those with a legitimate interest, to obtain the original birth certificate of an adopted person.

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