

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION STATEMENT  
ON HB 6566, AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY IN  
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

**March 11, 2013**

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Commission submits this statement in support of Proposed Bill 6566 which would increase the public's access to information about our state's economic development efforts, budget and tax structure.

The State of Connecticut invests hundreds of million dollars a year in economic assistance programs. The FOI Commission believes strongly that such a large government expenditure deserves public scrutiny and applauds the type of proactive disclosure contemplated by this bill. The FOI Commission wishes that the government would more often take the opportunity to provide easy access to government information that the public as a whole is likely interested in, without the need for a formal freedom of information request.

The proposal requires that the names of those receiving economic assistance from the state, in the form of a tax credit or abatement, be posted on a publicly accessible, searchable online database. Additional information such as the amount of state funds expended, the type of, and statutory authority for, such economic assistance, a description of the specific purpose for the assistance, the number of jobs created or retained, and analysis of net direct and indirect state economic benefit, would also be available. With this information, a member of the public, or a policy maker, could much more easily evaluate the success (or failure) of a particular economic development program or expenditure.

The FOI Commission also supports, in particular, that portion of the proposal that would require the Office of Policy and Management to post the state budget on its web site, showing all line item appropriations in a downloadable database. The proposal does not state that such database would be searchable, however, and the Commission would urge that the language be amended to clarify that the database would be searchable.

Finally, the FOI Commission notes that the proposal appears to strike the proper balance between openness and the protection of what might arguably be confidential financial information. Thus, while promoting transparency, the proposal also protects any information required to be kept confidential under federal or state law.

For the above reasons, the Freedom of Information Commission strongly supports HB 6566.

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