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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER**

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February 25, 2013

Co-Chairman – Senator Anthony Musto, Co-Chairman – Representative Ed Jutila,  
Ranking Member – Senator Michael McLachlan, Ranking Member Senator Tony Hwang

My name is Wayne Carver; I have the honor to serve as your Chief Medical Examiner.

I apologize for the fact that I cannot be here in person, but would like to address House Bill 5421 which would sequester or limit access to the Death Certificates of Minors. Unfortunately, I must rise to oppose this bill.

For the forty years of its existence the main function of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is to explain why people have died when the reason was not obvious through other means. For the previous eight hundred years this function was held in such high regard that it was performed by a personal representative of the king, the so called "Crownor" or as pronounced in Medieval French "Coroner". The main mechanism for doing this is the "Death Certificate".

When an individual dies and the reason is not known, speculation and miss-information abound soon followed by fear and unfortunately all too often their evil little brother conspiracy theory.

This is especially needful in minor children. Between the 30<sup>th</sup> day and the 18<sup>th</sup> year of life the vast majority of deaths come about through mechanisms that are suicidal, homicidal or accidental in nature, other words, they are preventable. But that which is not identified cannot be prevented. This prevention is not done by a small category of scientists but by society at large through its institutions the governments, religious organizations, educational institutions etc. This only works when the information is public.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner produces approximately 15% of the death certificates in the State of Connecticut. We make every effort to insure that the cause of death as listed on the certificate is not only precise and scientifically correct but also stated in such a way as to be socially acceptable and not offensive. The actual autopsy report, to which access is controlled, unfortunately cannot be written in any way other than to reveal what occasionally is the ugly truth.

An issue has also been raised that it would be appropriate to restrict access to information about where the body is buried. In my experience, the vast majority of cases the location of interment and services are published in the newspapers in the obituaries and more recent at the funeral homes web-site. In the last thirty years I have known of only a hand full of cases in which the family fearing either the press or in rare cases criminal elements

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have requested that the location of the interment services be held private. I can assure you every funeral director alive is capable of tweaking the system long enough to allow a grieving family to bury their dead in private.

I have great sympathy for the suffering of those who we serve I would have no business holding this position if I did not, but I believe, that this bill is a well intentioned effort to solve a problem which really does not exist and has the potential to create unintended problems.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns regarding Bill 5421.

Cc: Mike Lawlor, Under Secretary for Criminal Justice Policy and Planning  
Celia Pinzi, Commission on Medicolegal Investigations (Public Member)  
Jewel Mullen, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A., Commissioner, Dept. of Public Health  
Todd Fernow, J.D. Chairman, Commission on Medicolegal Investigations