

**Statement of the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information on Proposed House Bill 5421, An Act Exempting Death Certificates of Minors from Public Disclosure.**

**Friday, February 22, 2013**

Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Claude Albert, legislative chair of the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information. While we certainly sympathize with the sentiment expressed in this legislation's purpose, we would urge the legislature to be reluctant to seal death certificates. The key information in these most fundamental of official records serve a wide variety of important purposes and have always been available to the public.

Death certificates specify the time, place and cause of death. They do not, however, include detailed or graphic medical information, such as that contained in a medical examiner's autopsy report. Current law provides sweeping exemptions to public disclosure of these medical examiner findings. Other personal information on death certificates, such as Social Security number, race and educational level, is also already protected from disclosure.

Death certificates are critical in reporting and research on a wide variety of legal and public health issues. In addition, this bill also makes no provision for the cases of children who die in state custody, which must always be subject to close public scrutiny.

We believe the limited but important information now available on death certificates should remain public.