



State of Connecticut

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Testimony in Support of HB 5421- AN ACT EXEMPTING DEATH CERTIFICATES OF MINORS FROM PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

February 22, 2013

Government and Elections Administration Committee

I would like to thank the Honorable Co-Chairs Senator Anthony Musto and Representative Ed Jutila, the Honorable Vice Chairs Senator Meyer and Representative Matthew Lesser, and the Ranking Members Senator McLachlan and Representative Tony Hwang, and the entire membership of the Government and Elections Administration Committee for their time addressing this deeply personal and emotional issue.

This bill was inspired in the aftermath of the December 14, 2012 atrocities in my home town of Newtown to protect the families following the death of a child by limiting full-detail disclosure of selected public records, namely, for the purpose of this bill, Death Certificates, by statutory revision, thereby providing respectful privacy protection and preventative measures to deter identity theft, while still allowing for appropriate public disclosure. These are common sense changes that are also widely supported by the people of Newtown and its representatives, including Senator John McKinney, Representatives Dan Carter and DebraLee Hovey, and Newtown's First Selectman.

In addition to identity theft prevention, the bill will shield families and victims from public disclosure of personal details that may be inappropriate for public consumption and are not generally released in certified form; particularly for minor children, except to family, legal or probate personnel. Beyond those parties, release of burial site information, cause of death and person(s) identifying the deceased, should be left to the discretion of next of kin. Such is already the case for release of birth records, where release is limited only to identify family members.

Should all public record access be terminated? No. Public access to the deceased information should be confirmable by name and date of death. Access to certified copies of "long-form" death certificates should be restricted to only those who legally and responsibly require them.

In summary, I urge the members of the Government and Elections Administration Committee to support HB 5421 and help protect vital private information.

Thank you for your time and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.