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**TOWN OF NEWTOWN**  
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

**TESTIMONY**  
**Wednesday, February 20, 2013**

**Proposed Bill No. 5733 –**  
**An act concerning access to a child's death certificate**

Good Afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and other members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Aileen Nosal and I serve as an Assistant Town Clerk, and Assistant Registrar of Vital Statistics for the Town of Newtown.

I am testifying today in support of the proposed Bill 5733 An Act Concerning Access to a Child's Death Certificate, as well as similar legislation in Bills 5421, and 6157.

On December 14, 2012, twenty young children lost their lives in an unimaginable crime. The Town of Newtown and its residents have seen an outpouring of sympathy and well wishes from not only across the nation, but across the world. I believe that the outpouring has been so large, because the children who were lost were so young and people are connecting with that. These children had no fighting chance to protect themselves. No one asked for this to happen. No one wanted this to happen. And now, in the office of the Town Clerk, are 26 death certificates that should never have been there. Shortly after taking these death certificates into the office, we began receiving requests from the media to obtain copies of the certificates. We had never received a request for a death certificate from the media before December 14<sup>th</sup>. When the average person passes away, no one except the family and the funeral home comes in asking for copies, and yet, according to the law as it is right now, these death certificates are public information.

A death certificate contains a lot of information about the deceased. It contains information that seems obvious – the deceased's name, the date of death, the cause of death. However, a death certificate also includes other less obvious personal information – parents' names including mother's maiden name, informant's name and address, place of burial, residence, and social security number.

This is information that can be used to locate the place of burial of the deceased – a place that should be sacred ground for the family to pay their respects. This is information that can be used to steal a person's identity. The theft of a child's identity is less obvious because a credit report had never been established for someone so young. And with identity theft a growing problem, this is *not* information that the media - or anyone for that matter - needs to have access to, except for family and other approved groups.

The proposed bill suggests restricting access to a copy of the death certificate for children under eighteen years of age when the disclosure of the death certificate is likely to cause undue hardship for the family of the child, but I'm asking that this bill be amended to prevent the death certificates of all deceased people (18 years and older included) from being accessible by anyone but family at any time. Limiting the availability of a death certificate to only the necessary parties is imperative. They are called "vital records" for a reason. Information contained in a death certificate is both personal and identifying. These records should not be available to just anyone. The families in Newtown who lost their loved ones on December 14<sup>th</sup> have endured more than any of us could ever imagine. Please do your part to keep these families from enduring any more unnecessary pain. Please restrict access of vital records to only those who are absolutely necessary.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Aileen Nosal  
Assistant Town Clerk  
Town of Newtown