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

**TESTIMONY**

**PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, February 20, 2013**

**HB 5733 —An Act Concerning Access to a Child's Death Certificate**

Good Morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Renee Weimann and I serve as an Assistant Town Clerk and Assistant Registrar of Vital Statistics for the Town of Newtown CT. I am here today to testify in support of Bill #5733.

My specific job within my office is that of Vital Statistics. It is my responsibility to maintain all birth, death and marriage certificates in an orderly and confidential manner. Since the events on December 14, 2012, I have been adamant about keeping the death records for those 26 victims, more specifically the children, unavailable to the public, especially the press. As we have all seen, countless times, the media can be an incessant faction in their pursuit of information. They have hounded my office continuously almost since day one of the tragedy. I am unwavering about protecting the privacy of these victims and the immeasurable grief and heartbreak of their families. Although the details of the whole tragedy are out there on the internet, there are other details that must and should remain private. There is absolutely **NO** information on a death certificate that is needed by anyone from the press or the general public. The request for these records has no legitimate journalistic basis and serves no purpose to anyone but the family. The information contained therein only serves the immediate family and their unbearable task of burying their child or loved one.

Bill #5733 seeks to restrict access to the death record of a child under the age of eighteen when the disclosure of such record would cause undue hardship for the family of the child. I am proposing that we follow suit with the same statutes that manage birth and fetal death records and to some extent, adoption records. These records are not open for public disclosure and are only available to certain individuals. The release of these records would constitute an invasion of privacy, as they pertain to minors.

In order to protect the sensitive information such as where the deceased is buried, the cause of death, birth dates, their parents' names, mother's maiden name, and addresses, to name a few, I strongly urge the support and passage of this bill. I feel it is our responsibility to these children; yes, they were **ALL** someone's child, and their families, to permanently amend the current statute, so that death records are **NOT** open to public inspection and only to immediate family members.

It is my strong belief and fear that the disclosure of certain information would lead to identity theft and harassment of family members, not to mention the inevitable constant visitation of strangers to the gravesites, regardless of reason. The burial location is a place for friends and family to visit their loved one. It is a time of solace and reflection, especially for the families of those lost on December 14, 2012. The funerals were held privately for a reason, and the release of these death certificates to anyone but family members would surely negate those wishes for privacy by the families.

We must adapt to our ever changing world. We must not only protect the innocent at all times, but in these incomprehensible circumstances, also those they leave behind.

It is our duty and our responsibility.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak and advocate for change and am open to answer any further questions.

Respectfully,

Renee Weimann  
Assistant Town Clerk  
Newtown, CT.