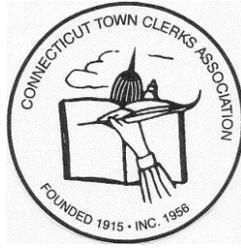


# **Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.**



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## **TESTIMONY**

### **COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH Wednesday, February 27, 2013**

#### **HB 6157 – An Act Concerning Personally Identifying Information on Certifications of Marriage and Death**

Good Morning, Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Committee on Public Health. My name is Michele Grande and I am the Town Clerk and Registrar of Vital Statistics for the Town of Redding and a member of the Legislative Committee for the Connecticut Town Clerk's Association. I am here to testify on HB 6157 – An Act Concerning Personally Identifying Information on Certifications of Marriage and Death.

As a direct result of the tragedy in Newtown and the numerous requests for copies of death certificates of the victims, two bills have been introduced which would limit access to death records and a third, this bill, which would limit access to both marriage and death records.

As “keeper of the records” we, as town clerks, are very protective of the records in our custody, but we are also fully aware of our responsibility to the public to disclose information as required by law. While it is true that our vital records have traditionally been open for nearly 400 years, the time in which we NOW live and the way in which people access information has changed and we feel now is the time to change the way we handle these vital records. With today's technology advances, internet access worldwide 24/7, there is potential for instant accessibility to all different kinds of *personal* information. We hear more and more about identity theft, fraud and harassment. Since town clerks are in possession of personal and private information as a result of the filing of a marriage or death certificate, which includes: name, address, date of birth, town/state of birth, mother's maiden name; we believe we should be able to keep this information secure and not reveal it to just anyone asking for it. We feel an obligation to protect our residents and their personal information; restricting access to only those with a bona fide use of such private/personal information.

The Connecticut Town Clerks Association has proposed an amendment concerning the issuance of vital records whereby only certain information would be disclosed to the general public. With regard to deaths occurring less than one hundred years ago, upon the request of anyone other than an immediate family member, informant, funeral director, licensed embalmer, attorney-at-law, conservator, or genealogist, we would issue of a “Certification of Death Registration” which would include the name of the decedent, sex, date of death and town of death.

In the case of marriages occurring less than one hundred years ago, upon the request of anyone other than the parties to said marriage or their immediate family members, attorneys-at-law or genealogists, we would issue a "Certification of Marriage Registration" which would include the names of parties married, date of marriage and town of marriage. Long form death and marriage certificates would still be available to family and others as listed above. We feel this would ensure appropriate access to vital records and balance the public's right to know with the protection and privacy that we are seeking for our residents.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have concerning this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele R. Grande, MCTC-CMC  
Redding Town Clerk  
Member, CTCA Legislative Committee