



Connecticut Department of Public Health

**Testimony Presented before the Public Health Committee
February 28, 2014**

**Commissioner Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA
860-509-7101**

**House Bill 5144 – An Act Concerning Access to Birth Certificates
and Parental Health Information for Adopted Persons**

The Department of Public Health opposes House Bill 5144.

This bill authorizes the Department of Public Health to release a copy of the original birth certificate of a person, upon request of such person after reaching the age of 21, or other authorized applicant if such person is deceased. The proposal also gives the Department new responsibilities as follows:

- The Department will be required to furnish, collect, maintain, and issue Contact Preference forms, the form that allows a biological parent to state his or her preference about being contacted by the adult adoptee.
- The Department will be required to furnish, collect, maintain, and issue Health History forms related to the biological parents.
- The Department will be required to issue quarterly reports regarding the usage of the Contact Preference forms, whether or not biological parents are consenting to contact with their biological child, and how many original birth certificates are requested.

The Department opposes this bill for several reasons. First and foremost, this proposal gives responsibilities to DPH that are beyond the scope of its mission. The Vital Records Section is responsible for collecting and maintaining birth, marriage, and death data. It has no involvement in the adoption process, except that when someone is adopted the Department will remove the original birth certificate from the active registry and replace it with a certificate that reflects the adoption information. This is merely a clerical function. In contrast, this proposal involves the Department in aspects of the adoption process that it is ill-equipped to handle. Working with parents who have had children removed from their care, either voluntarily or involuntarily, requires a certain skill set that Vital Records staff do not possess. It would be more effective to retain these functions with DCF, the agency that is already responsible for handling these functions through the State Adoption Registry that, among other obligations, deals with reuniting adoptees with their biological parents, and collecting and maintaining health information of biological parents.

Additionally, the fiscal impact of the bill will be significant. Adoption records are maintained off-site, so obtaining these records involves considerable cost – car usage fees as well as staff time. Even more

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