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Testimony

In Opposition of SB 414

An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Concerning Genealogists' Access to Vital Records.

Good morning Representative Johnson, Senator Gerratana and honorable members of the Public Health Committee. I testify today in opposition to Raised bill 414: An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Concerning Genealogists' Access to Vital Records.

Current law grants Genealogists access to vital records during all normal business hours. SB 414 would alter the pre-existing arrangement by allowing a registrar of vital statistics to either grant a genealogist immediate access to such records **or** require them to schedule an appointment to access them.

The proposed change to the bill is rather broad and the restrictions it might place on genealogists are likely to impede their ability to do their job or serve as a tremendous inconvenience for those who study genealogy as a hobby.

Genealogists can provide a significant service that benefits humanity. Through the work of genealogists, people are able to trace their ancestry and come to a better understanding of who they are and where they come from.

Genealogy allows a person to come to a more thorough understanding of family traditions and of how they came to live in a certain area. These things can strengthen the bond one feels towards their family and give them a more thorough understanding of their own identity.

In addition to strengthening family ties and fostering a better understanding of oneself, genealogy can also help a person develop realistic expectations about which health conditions they may be forced to contend with throughout their lives. Because such a high percentage of the illnesses that plague people are genetic, having a thorough understanding of one's genealogy can help a person live their life in an educated and responsible way geared towards optimizing their health and well-being.

In order to do their job and allow people to enjoy the benefits associated with their practice, genealogists must have access to the vital records. The proposed legislation is apt to put restrictions on this.

The current system which grants genealogists access to the vital records they need to perform the functions of their job has worked well. In my opinion, the proposed bill seeks to fix an unbroken system.

Furthermore, SB 414 appears to unfairly target one group of individuals who access the same records as other interested parties.

Thank you for the committee's time and consideration on this issue.

Sincerely,

David W. Kiner

State Representative, 59th District
