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Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Committee  
In support of Governor's Bill 949, "An Act Improving Data Security and Agency  
Effectiveness."

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Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, Senator McLachlan, Representative Smith, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Bennett Pudlin. I am a Director of The Charter Oak Group, LLC, a small consulting company located in Glastonbury, CT. I am here today in support of the Governor's Bill 949, "An Act Improving Data Security and Agency Effectiveness." The purposes of the bill are: 1) to ensure that confidential information maintained by the state is kept secure; and 2) to give OPM the authority to act on behalf of executive agencies in responding to research requests that require access to data maintained by two or more agencies.

The Charter Oak Group has a long history of working with both summary public data and individual client data, which often contain confidential or personally identifying information. We have routinely combined client data for both the federal and state governments in order to produce analyses and reports on client outcomes, such as whether participants in employment and training programs obtain and retain employment at a living wage. We understand the enormous benefits and risks involved in such work and welcome this legislation as an important step toward assuring the public that confidential and personally identifying information will be kept secure.

We also know how difficult it can be to secure the agreements and approvals necessary for data matching projects. Agencies are understandably cautious and sometimes have inconsistent or overly restrictive requirements. A consistent, comprehensive, statewide framework and process for handling requests for data access will offer maximum

protection to the public while enabling appropriate and responsible research and coordinated case management to occur.

I applaud the Governor for taking a critical first step with Executive Order 39, which requires that Executive Branch agencies make all public data available on the state's Open Data Portal. Governor's Bill 949 is a complement to the Executive Order in that it now provides a way to make confidential data available to both state agencies and private entities with essential safeguards.

It is no secret that, until recently, Connecticut was data challenged in nearly every possible way. We have come a long way in the last few years as data have become more accessible to the public, and state agencies have increasingly recognized the importance of taking advantage of their own data to drive strategies and actions at the population level and to improve the quality of their services and programs.

Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go. Many state agencies lack the resources to respond to the ever increasing requests from the public or even to utilize their own data and the data of partner programs for case management purposes. Despite the Governor's Executive Order, some state agencies still lag in making public data available, and some are reluctant to allow members of the public to probe too deeply into the agency's data in ways that the agency itself is unable or unwilling to do. This legislation relieves state agencies of the burden and responsibility of responding to requests for data matching and access and ensures that such requests will be treated consistently and reasonably.

I urge you to act favorably on this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.