



# DENISE W. MERRILL

SECRETARY OF THE STATE

CONNECTICUT

**Government Administration and Elections Committee  
Testimony of Secretary of the State Denise W Merrill  
Presented by Deputy Secretary of the State James F. Spallone  
March 2, 2015**

I am pleased to support **SB 949: AA Improving Data Security and Agency Effectiveness.**

Like a number of you, I have had the privilege of serving for many years in state government. And in that time I have struggled with how to best inform our policy decisions.

While our freedom of information laws in CT are strong, accessing sources of information can be challenging, even for those of us who have decades of experience. We need to make it easier for people to find public information. And we need to make sure that information can be accessed in a usable format. That is what I believe it means to provide "public information" in this day and of age

Beyond that we need to also make sure that the information housed at agencies can interface with another agency's data. Currently, this can be very difficult. Agencies need to consider how that data might be used by someone outside of *their* agency.

For example, in my office we maintain the list of registered businesses in CT. Someone might want to match that information with information from the Department of Labor regarding what type of industry the business is in. But on my list that company might be listed as the Jonathan A Smith Plumbing and on the Department of Labor that same company might be listed as the John A Smith Plumbing. That small distinction could prevent a successful data match of the two lists.

If we are to harness the power of the information available to us we must have a system that connects our agencies to one another, and our policy choices will be better informed because of it.

The staff at OPM working on this effort is transforming public information. And they can only succeed if we all share in that effort; that I why I am submitting testimony today.

**I would also like to comment on HB 6842 AA Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning General Government**

The governor's budget calls for a move of the State Board of Accountancy, currently in the Office of the Secretary of the State to the Department of Consumer Protection. This change was not a requested by me and I urge the Committee to consider what structure provides the best services to the consumer and the profession.

Over the last several years the Board has had a sort of renewal. Several new members have been appointed. The staff has been reorganized to best serve the Board. A backlog of cases that resulted from an unfilled counsel position has been eliminated. The staff and Board have launched new initiatives, including outreach to colleges and universities with accounting programs. Their relationship with the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy and the Connecticut Society of Public Accountants has been re-energized. . The certification and regulation of Certified Public Accountants is a very important and very complex duty. Transferring the Board to a new agency could cause disruption and compromise its consumer protection mission. I urge you to keep these things in mind. I am happy to continue to house and staff the Board if you so choose.