



Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council
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20 March 2015

Re: An Act Concerning Fees for Genealogy Searches, H.B. 6280

The Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council opposes H.B. 6280.

The testimony that the Joint Committee on Public Health heard in support of this bill is misleading and incomplete. We wish to correct the flawed information with accurate information.

Indra Sen testified on behalf of the City of Bridgeport that "Professional genealogist searches typically cost eighty to one-hundred and twenty-five dollars per hour." This is completely wrong. This multiplies the fees of local professional genealogists by three to five times the amount charged.

Mr. Sen also stated that this type of search takes "up to seven hours for each request." This is completely incorrect. Birth, marriage, and death records are indexed. Even with allowance made for spelling inconsistencies, such a search takes less than 15 minutes.

These assertions made by Mr. Sen and repeated by Rep. Ezequiel Santiago are incorrect.

In addition, Connecticut statutes currently allow for genealogists to make these searches themselves, freeing up all staff time otherwise needed to fulfill other responsibilities. Section 7-51 states:

- During all normal business hours, members of genealogical societies ...in this state shall... have full access to all vital records in the custody of any registrar of vital statistics...

Although other cities in Connecticut comply with this section, the City of Bridgeport does not. Bridgeport's vital records office is open five days a week, but permits access to genealogists only on Tuesday.

It is clear that if the City of Bridgeport complied with the law, the vital statistics office would not be subject to "up to ten [inquiries] per month." Professional genealogists who routinely perform these searches quickly and efficiently would be able to continue earning their living by providing this necessary service to those who cannot visit the office in person.

Note, too, it is not always necessary to use professional help for lookups. Non-professional members of genealogy societies in Connecticut can do this as well. The Connecticut Society of Genealogy provides an overview of statutes relating to this issue on their website at http://csginc.org/web_page.php?id=20 including Public Act 96-258, which defines vital records access.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Nora Galvin, President