



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

February 24, 2016

**Commissioner Raul Pino, MD, MPH
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Senate Bill #128 - An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations on Fees for Vital Records

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports Senate Bill #128, and offers the following information regarding the Department's bill.

This proposal will allow the Department of Public Health and local vital records offices to charge a search fee for a vital record. The search fee will cover the cost of a certified copy of the vital record if found, or a letter of 'No Record Found' if the record is not on file.

The Department receives approximately 13,500 requests per year for certified copies of birth, death and marriage certificates. Of these requests, about 15% are unfilled because no record is on file. Local vital records offices experience similar scenarios, with the number of overall requests varying depending upon the size of the town.

The State Vital Records Office is permitted by statute to charge a fee for the issuance of a certified copy of a vital record – \$30 for a birth certificate and \$20 for a marriage or death certificate. Local vital records offices charge \$20 for all vital records. The fees only apply when a record is found and a certified copy of the record can be issued. When a record cannot be found the Department and local registrars must return the fee, meaning that they receive no compensation for searching for the record or the time spent to prepare correspondence informing the requester of the negative search result.

Based upon the diligent work that vital records staff perform to fill each request, much time and cost is involved in searching for a record. Those records that are ultimately not found are those upon which staff expend the most time – multiple databases and index books must be searched before it is determined that the record is not on file, and communication between the different offices takes place to confirm that the record is not recorded in another vital records office. Yet, the Department and local registrars receive no compensation for this considerable expenditure of time and resources.

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Given the substantial time and costs involved in processing unfilled requests, the Department is proposing that fees be applied to the *search* for the vital record. It should be noted that *at least 46* of the 50 states charge a non-refundable search fee for vital records requests.

The Department would like to thank the committee for raising the Department's bill.

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