

TESTIMONY FOR RAISED BILL 5173
An Act Protecting the Privacy of Voters
February 26, 2018

Good morning. My name is Sarah Darer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Raised Bill 5173.

I've come before you wearing three hats. The first is that of a journalist who is a firm believer that the Freedom of Information Act is critical for maintaining a healthy democracy, by allowing citizens and journalists to hold government accountable.

The second hat, however, is of a woman who because of her work, has been subjected to threats, including being raped and being made into a "real victim."

Finally, I'm here as a Connecticut resident who, despite taking strong cyber security precautions in my own life, has nonetheless had my personal and credit card information compromised merely because I had health insurance or shopped at certain stores. Anthem, Equifax, Home Depot, TJ Maxx, Target, Stratfor, and my local carwash are just some of the hacks where my personal data has been exposed.

With Raised Bill 5173, you have an important opportunity to enact legislation that meets Freedom of Information Act requirements, while protecting the safety, both physical and financial, of state residents.

Three years ago, I was appalled to find out that Tom Alciere, a former Republican legislator in New Hampshire who was forced to resign over comments like: "Nobody will ever be safe until the last cop is dead," had published the entire Connecticut Voter database at a website called ConnVoters.com. He's since updated that information with the 2017 voter database, including every voter's name, address and dates of birth. The 2015 file included my then 18 year-old daughter's address at university and her cell phone number, merely because she registered to vote absentee.

If you have children, please consider how it feels to be a mother who has received rape threats to know that her daughter's whereabouts at college several states away are available online for any stalker or psychopath to find.

This information should not be published. CT residents should not be forced to choose between registering to exercise their right to vote and their privacy and personal safety.

That's not all. Due to the inability of major American corporations to maintain adequate cyber security, most residents have probably been compromised in at least one major hack, if not more.

When I applied for a mortgage, I was asked to sign an affidavit for a long list of "Also Known As" names – many of which were variations on my name that I'd never seen before. Since I know that my hacked personal data has been used to make unauthorized charges, I had to tell the bank that I was only willing to vouch for names that I have used legally.

Releasing Connecticut voters' full dates of birth with no prohibition on publishing them online is just handing another tool to cybercriminals.

Please act now to protect our state's residents. Our personal and financial safety depends on you.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sarah E. Darer
d/b/a Sarah Darer Littman
P.O. Box 150469 – 0473
30 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06115-0469