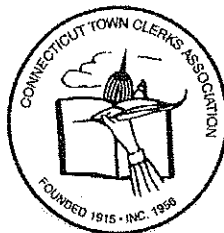


Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.

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Betsy Brown, Fairfield
Lisa Dalton, Watertown
Bernice Dixon, Vernon
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Testimony of CTCA Legislative Committee

Judiciary Committee - Date: March 9, 2018 – **SB 396**, An Act Concerning Justices of the Peace Who Serve as Marriage Officiants

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, Representative Rebimbas and the distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Mark Bernacki, I am the Town Clerk in New Britain and the Legislative Chair of the Connecticut Town Clerks Association. I appreciate this opportunity to present testimony which highlights our concerns with **SB 396**, An Act Concerning Justices of the Peace Who May Serve as Marriage Officiants.

Connecticut Town Clerks have the responsibility of issuing marriage licenses. The process includes the couple appearing in the Clerk office to complete the marriage license. This includes the production of valid government issued photo IDs, their signatures and an oath affirming the accuracy of the information. The couple does not need to produce the information regarding the officiant. This is an issue we would like to bring to your attention.

The couple then obtains the marriage license and then secures the services of a clergy member or a justice of the peace. Connecticut clerks are at the mercy of the integrity and honesty of the couple and officiant. Marriage licenses are permanent vital records and accuracy is critical.

By expanding the pool of participants to include a justice of the peace for a single marriage occurrence this bill will lead to more problems in tracking marriage licenses. Town Clerks are concerned with the integrity of the document and the proper filing of the license so that there is access to this permanent record. With this proposed expansion, there will most certainly be more inaccurate marriage records filed with town clerks.

Our Association appreciate the opportunity to highlight these concerns as you consider taking action on SB 396.

Mark H. Bernacki, CCTC, MBA
New Britain Town & City Clerk
Connecticut Town Clerk Association – Chair, Legislative & Elections Committee