

**Judiciary Committee**  
**JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** HB-5349  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE TIMELY REPORTING BY THE POLICE OF A  
**Title:** DEATH.  
**Vote Date:** 3/29/2022  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 3/9/2022  
**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

**SPONSORS OF BILL:**

INTRODUCED BY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Rep. Steven J. Stafstrom, 129th Dist.  
Sen. Gary A. Winfield, 10th Dist.  
Rep. Christopher Rosario, 128th Dist.  
Rep. Antonio Felipe, 130th Dist.  
Rep. Craig C. Fishbein, 90th Dist.  
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.  
Sen. Dennis A. Bradley, 23rd Dist.  
Rep. Corey P. Paris, 145th Dist.  
Sen. Marilyn V. Moore, 22nd Dist.  
Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.  
Rep. Edwin Vargas, 6th Dist.  
Rep. Eleni Kavros DeGraw, 17th Dist.  
Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.  
Rep. Robyn A. Porter, 94th Dist.  
Rep. John-Michael Parker, 101st Dist.  
Rep. Maria P. Horn, 64th Dist.  
Rep. Jillian Gilchrest, 18th Dist.  
Rep. Cara Christine Pavalock-D'Amato, 77th Dist.  
Rep. Andre F. Baker, 124th Dist.  
Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.  
Rep. John "Jack" F. Hennessy, 127th Dist.

**SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

In line 15, changes "...[a] next of kin" to "...the next of kin" to clarify intent.

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

HB5349 aims to establish guidelines for timely reporting of deaths to next of kin when peace officers encounter a death. Additionally, HB 5349 establishes penalties for failing to report a death without a suitable reason. HB 5349 is in large part, a response to the recent failure of the Bridgeport police department to report the deaths of two black women to their next of kin.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None Given

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Council 4 AFSCME- Brian Anderson, Legislative Director**

Mr. Anderson sympathizes with the bulk of HB5349 in general, however he expresses concern over provisions which may hold discovering officers responsible for the report of a death to a decedent's next of kin. He suggests that the Chief or administrative staff would be better suited to this task, as rank and file officers who encounter a death generally have their hands full with existing responsibilities and procedure.

**Leanne Harpin**

Ms. Harpin testified in support of HB 5349, citing the cases of Lauren Smith-Fields and Brenda Lee Rawls, two deceased black women in Connecticut who recently came to national attention when it was discovered that the Bridgeport Police Department at no point reported their deaths to their relatives. Ms. Harpin also notes the insensitive and apathetic disposition of police officers when the families brought their complaints to the attention of law enforcement. Ms. Harpin calls for a more robust system of accountability to prevent malfeasance and to better ensure equal protection under the law.

**ACLU of Connecticut – Jess Zaccagnino**

Ms. Zaccagnino testified in support of HB 5349 on behalf of the ACLU of Connecticut. She echoes the sentiments of other supporters citing the cases of Lauren Smith-Fields and Brenda Lee Rawls. Ms. Zaccagnino explains that these cases are symptomatic of larger systemic issues in police-community relations which she argues have a disparate impact on Black and Latino communities.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

NONE GIVEN

**Other:**

**David Godbout**

Mr. Godbout maintains that retaliatory violence against law enforcement is the only proper recourse in the event police fail to notify next of kin of the death of a family member. Mr. Godbout asserts that this has worked in the past. Further, Mr. Godbout complains that legislative proceedings conducted via zoom constitute an unreasonable search of his domicile, and therefore violate the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment. Mr. Godbout expressed concern about the possibility of being prosecuted for what may be visible or audible inside his home while testifying via zoom.

