



## Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information

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### **SB 325, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DISCLOSURE OF THE RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AND ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE CONCERNING MASS REQUESTS UNDER THE ACT**

#### **Committee on Government Oversight**

**March 3, 2026**

Good afternoon Sen. Gadkar-Wilcox, Rep. Dathan, Ranking Members Sampson and Carney and Honorable Members of the Committee on Government Oversight:

My name is Jodie Gil, and I am a member of the board of directors of the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information (CCFOI). We are a 70-year-old organization comprised of CT news media outlets and First Amendment supporters. Our mission is to advocate and promote government transparency, public access, a strong Freedom of Information law and other measures that guarantee the rights of individuals and journalists under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the state Constitution.

**CCFOI opposes Section 1 in SB 325**, which adds a new group of public employees – certified public school teachers – to the list of those whose residential addresses are exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Many public servants have legitimate concerns about safety in a climate of increasing political violence in this country. Some have been harassed, attacked and even killed at home. This is not OK. Certain professions are more vulnerable to this harassment – in particular those working in the justice system.

But while it feels necessary to try to do something about that problem, exempting home addresses from release on public documents does not fully protect people, and can raise alternative issues.

The lack of protection comes from the many avenues through which your home address is available. A simple Internet search will bring up loads of information on a person, including relatives, past addresses, and multiple phone numbers, among other data points. This used to be standard phone book material. Now for \$6 a month, I can access full reports on anyone across the country. Much of this information is held by corporations that sell your information as part of their business plan. When I applied to refinance my mortgage, my information was likely sold by a data broker company, and I now get frequent text messages and postcards from investors who want to purchase my home. Your home address is part of your maps data, your social networks and other digital platforms you use. When my family purchased a used car, the former owner's home address was still programmed into the in-car GPS system. The car was owned by a police officer who did not remove his own address from the car's system.

Removing access to home addresses on public records could limit one – but not all – of the avenues to access that information, providing a false sense of security. And there is an existing safety and security exemption to help protect those who need it.

On the flip side, there are benefits to having home addresses available on public records, in particular to the verification work of journalists. In [a survey I conducted in 2023 of journalists who use FOI in their work](#), the top uses for home addresses in reporting included fact checking identities, locating sources, and telling location-based stories. More than 85% of the journalists reported using home addresses in routine fact checking of identities. In Louisiana, for example, if a Mike Johnson is arrested, the address will very much help journalists identify if that's U.S. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, the Speaker Pro Tempore of the Louisiana State Legislature Mike Johnson, or just your regular old Mike Johnson. One reporter surveyed was able to track campaign finance contributions coming from a single address to identify bundling of donations to a single candidate. Another outlined the geographic diversity of an at-large board of education in her state, which had concentrations in one neighborhood. Another interviewed homeowners who had bought HUD properties in flood zones. Because most journalists are not publishing these addresses, this important work happens in the background and is not always apparent to the public.

CCFOI proposes a shift from profession-protections to a process that will allow specific concerned individuals to request protections. No doubt, there are some among the 53,000 K-12 public school teachers in the state who need this exemption for specific safety concerns. But likely, all Connecticut residents in teaching jobs, myself included, do not as a matter of our profession need this exemption.

Instead of exempting teachers, and then leaving the next profession wanting an exemption, why don't we create a process that can allow concerned individuals to opt out? Some states have a similar approach. In Nevada, for example, [anyone can get a court order to document their concern, and then apply for an exemption](#). This would require some discussion and time to get it right. Just as SB 325 proposes in Section 2, we could set up a task force to explore the options. CCFOI requests a pause on new exemptions while an alternative process is explored.

**CCFOI supports Section 2 of SB 325**, which creates a task force to study AI mass requests under FOI, but respectfully requests that a journalist be included in the task force make-up.

Respectfully,

Jodie Gil