



ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM TONG
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill No. 1220, *An Act Concerning the Exemption from Disclosure of Residential Addresses under the Freedom of Information Act*
Government Administration and Elections Committee
Monday, March 20, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the above-referenced proposal.

It is a great honor to lead and serve alongside the employees of the Office of the Attorney General. They are truly dedicated and effective public servants. In addition to both generating *and* saving the State hundreds of millions of dollars each year, our attorneys protect children from abuse and neglect, represent state agencies in employment disputes and matters of public safety, and appear in court to establish parentage and recover child support. Of note, in all these scenarios, the residential addresses of all the other state employees – the judges, the prosecutors and public defenders and the Department of Children and Families and Department of Corrections employees – are already protected from public disclosure. Our Office’s employees should receive the same protection.

H.B. 1220 would exempt the residential addresses of employees of the Office of the Attorney General, certain employees of the Department of Aging and Disability Services, and judicial marshals from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Unfortunately, the need for our Office’s inclusion in the statute carving out certain residential addresses from release as public records, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-217, is not theoretical. Currently, under Connecticut’s Freedom of Information Act, regardless of the circumstances under which an individual may seek the home address for an employee, that information is public. This means that any disgruntled individual could obtain this personal information, and unfortunately, our employees have direct experience with opposing parties and others putting their safety and that of their families at risk.

Each year, the list of threats and intimidation to employees of the Office of the Attorney General seems to grow. Here are some recent examples reported by employees of the office:

- **Disturbing mail containing feces and urine addressed to an Assistant Attorney General;**
- **Harassment and abuse in open court;**
- **A threat by an inmate to “shoot up” an attorney’s house upon release from prison;**
- **Letters sent to an employee’s home threatening their family;**
- **Vandalism to homes and personal property and strange cars parked outside an employee’s home that sped away when approached;**
- **Stalking and harassment, requiring the intervention of law enforcement leading to an arrest; and**



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- **Being subjected to routine harassment and threats of violence online, including posting of specific information about staff and their families, demeaning, racist, misogynist, antisemitic and altogether vile comments and references to violence and violent imagery, designed to intimidate and chill the staff of the Office of the Attorney General from fulfilling their constitutional, statutory and ethical duties as lawyers for the State of Connecticut.**

In addition, the staff of the Office report countless instances of threatening and profanity-laden phone calls at home and at work. These incidents have caused members of my office to fear for their safety and install flood lighting and security systems at their homes at great personal expense.

We can all agree that the safety of our public employees is both paramount and increasingly being put at risk. From the federal judge whose family was shot at her home by a disgruntled litigant, to threats against the safety of elections officials and members of local boards of education, to the insurrection in our nation's Capitol, we have seen the safety and security of public servants put at risk, for simply doing the jobs we ask them to do.

Some may argue that a person using the internet can track down the likely home address of just about anyone, and while this may be true, there is no reason why the State of Connecticut should facilitate making this information public. When given the opportunity, as you are now with this bill, we should do everything we can to protect those who serve us.

We ask that you join our effort to protect the residential addresses of employees within the Office of the Attorney General and other employees covered by this bill, so that our work on behalf of the State can be done without fear and intimidation.

For additional information, please contact Cara Passaro, Chief of Staff to the Attorney General at cara.passaro@ct.gov.