



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, Secretary of State

March 6, 2025

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House Committee on State Government & Elections

RE: In support of House Bill 5871 – An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Vital Records

Dear Chair Shanley,

I write this letter in support of House Bill 5871, legislation that ensures vital records are not amended to preserve their historical integrity.

As Secretary of State, my top priority has been making government more accessible and transparent for all Rhode Islanders, which subsequently supports civic engagement. The State Archives is an indispensable tool for upholding transparency in government—it safeguards Rhode Island's historical assets and records, including vital records from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH).

Our office works actively with RIDOH on the preservation and care of these birth, marriage, and death records for Rhode Islanders. Each year, these records are transferred to the State Archives once they reach maturity and become open, and access restrictions are lifted. This proposed legislation will ensure vital records remain as they were originally created and provide an accurate record of vital events as they occurred and were recorded.

One of the primary duties of the State Archives is to preserve and maintain the history of our State. No other record within the State Archives custody is allowed to be amended or altered once transferred, and a vital record should not be the exception. Any information that would be requested for amendment can be documented via letter or other means to demonstrate the information that needs to be clarified for a government-driven transaction or a particular request; however, the original document should remain intact.

I urge this committee to support House Bill 5871, as it will improve the transparency and preserve the integrity of historic vital records.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at marias@sos.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections
The Honorable Terri Cortvriend

State House, Room 218, Providence, RI 02903

Phone: 401-222-2357 | Fax: 401-222-1356 | secretaryamore@sos.ri.gov | www.sos.ri.gov