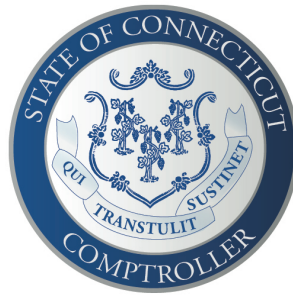


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**Written Testimony  
Comptroller Kevin Lembo  
March 5, 2018**

**Concerning  
H.B. 5261: An Act Concerning Fees Charged By Municipalities Under The Freedom Of  
Information Act.  
&  
H.B. 5271: An Act Redefining "Public Agency" For Purposes Of The Freedom Of Information  
Act.**

Good morning Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator McLachlan, Representative Devlin, and Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

I write today to testify **in opposition to H.B. 5261**. This legislation would permit municipalities to levy additional fees on Freedom of Information requests that would result in a commercial gain by the requestor. While there are rightful concerns about privacy, I believe this legislation takes the wrong approach to addressing them. Access to public records and documents is a necessity for an open and honest government. Placing selective financial barriers — different costs for different requestors — is antithetical to that effort. It raises the threat of unnecessary delays in public access for all citizens, as no clear or fair mechanism exists to determine the intent of one request over another. Furthermore, the Freedom of Information Act already provides exemptions for personal and private information. I would urge the committee to work with stakeholders to find other means of ensuring privacy where appropriate and continuing the effort by Connecticut and its municipalities to be national leaders in government transparency.

I also write **in support of H.B. 5271**. Organizations formed by statute should be subject to Freedom of Information requirements throughout their existence. The continued work, findings and recommendations of these groups will only be enhanced if the public has the same level of open access expected of public agencies. Transparency is necessary to hold all public agencies and groups accountable to Connecticut taxpayers and is a value that our state must continue to hold in concert with its citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.