



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1408, An Act Requiring a Study of Agency Response Times to Freedom of Information Act Requests

Senator Gadkar-Wilcox, Representative Dathan, Ranking Members Sampson and Carney, and members of the Government Oversight Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify in support of Senate Bill 1408, An Act Requiring a Study of Agency Response Times to Freedom of Information Act Requests.

Injustice thrives in the dark. The ability to shed sunlight on government action through open records requests is essential to holding police accountable and to preventing state-sanctioned discrimination, abuse, and mismanagement. As an organization that values government transparency and accessibility, the ACLU-CT deeply believes in making and keeping governmental records open and available to all people in the widest possible range of circumstances. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a key tool for ensuring that government is open for, and thus accountable to, the public.

Tardy responses to FOI requests should be taken very seriously, with the understanding that a transparent government is the only way to keep and expand democratic freedoms for all of us. Senate Bill 1408 is a small but good initial step to holding state agencies accountable to their freedom of information duties. It is important to learn more about which state agencies are the least transparent when it comes to FOIA response times. This Committee must go further than requiring a study and pass legislation to ensure agencies process FOI requests in a timely

manner and to hold those agencies accountable when they fail to do so. The ACLU-CT supports Senate Bill 1408, and urges this Committee to do the same.