

Health and Human Services Committee
LB 904
January 20, 2012

Dr. Joann Schaefer
Chief Medical Officer and Director
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon Senator Campbell and members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

I am Dr. Joann Schaefer (J-O-A-N-N S-C-H-A-E-F-E-R), the Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health in the Department of Health and Human Services. I am here today to testify in a neutral capacity on LB 904. This bill eliminates the current statutory requirement that requires that the dissolution and annulment form be completed as a prerequisite to the granting of a final decree. It eliminates the \$25 fine that is available if the clerk refuses or neglects to report dissolution or annulment information in a timely manner. In addition, it adds duties to the Division of Public Health to provide noncertified copies of divorce and annulment amendments to the clerk of the court in which the certificate was originally filed.

The Vital Statistics form that is required by the Department contains information which is used, in the aggregate, for assessing the impact of divorce and annulment on our state and its citizens. A portion of this information, such as the Social Security number, is also used within the Department for the purposes of establishing and monitoring child and medical support obligations. This information is important to maintaining the integrity of the data that is used for public health purposes.

The Department does not object to removing the language related to the \$25 fine for failure to timely report as clerks have been diligent about filing this information and the fine actually goes back to the county.

This legislation would require the Division of Public Health to hire an additional .50 FTE in order to track and provide noncertified copies of dissolution and annulment amendments back to the clerk in the county where the certificate was originally filed. This is an additional duty that the Division of Public Health is not currently undertaking.

My staff has been working with representatives from the Clerk's Association to establish a process for collecting and filing this information that will meet the needs of the Clerk and DHHS.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.