

HB 3037 testimony to House Rules committee

- Chair Hoyle, members of the committee
- My name is Catherine Stearns and I worked for the state for more than 25 years, I worked in direct client services in DHS. I am here representing myself today.
- I am in support of HB 3037. *I don't believe that when I signed up to work for the public that my personal information should be public record to anyone who requests it. I understand that my name, my job, my workplace, my salary, and my retirement is public but not my personal cell phone, my address where my family lives, and personal identification information such as my driver's card number.*
- During most of those years working for DHS, I also served as an elected Union steward and officer. In my Union capacity, I got to hear many sad stories of DHS workers losing their peace of mind during their time off from work. I continually agitated for more training for workers put in harm's way due to their job duties.
- I have no recollection of even being informed of my personal contact information being a public record. Even I had been informed; I doubt that it would have spelled out for me that my employment left me vulnerable to stalkers and death threats.
- When I worked as a DHS case manager, I was part of a multi-disciplinary team focusing on the needs of long-term welfare recipients.
- A licensed psychologist co-worker informed me, that one of our mutual clients threatened my life and the lives of my co-workers. We had reports that were later substantiated, that this particular client is a violent pedophile. For months while the investigation continued, I lost the ability to enjoy being out in my yard and garden or even doing my grocery shopping, as I felt so very exposed to a very real danger. There was no peace in my life until he was incarcerated, convicted and sentenced to 100 years. Granted this is an isolated instance in my career with DHS. Similar scenarios are more frequent with the protective services workers especially in child welfare.
- Many of us do dangerous jobs, we go into people's home and take their children, we demand people pay child support, we arrest people and every day we keep our communities safe. It is important that we also feel safe and that we have a choice in what personal information is shared and not just automatically shared because we signed up to serve the public.
- I know that I sign up to have some of my personal information shared when I decided to serve the public; I just think that I should be able to have my own privacy and safety as well.

Chair Hoyle & Committee members, Thank-you for hearing my testimony!
Catherine Stearns

