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*From the Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Secretary Of The State Bysiewicz, Leading Lawmakers And Advocates Unveil "Advance Health Care Directive Registry"**

*New system will allow for secure emergency access to critical documents;  
peace of mind for families with health care emergencies*

Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz today unveiled a major new initiative for her office for 2006 – an Advance Health Care Directive Registry that will create a safe, secure repository of critical health care documents that can be accessed online 24 hours a day by family members and health care providers responsible for carrying out an individual's wishes in these critical matters. With this new registry, anyone's advance care directive – such as a Living Will or Health Care Power of Attorney - can be instantly accessible to health care providers or family members who may not know what that person's wishes are.

Joined by Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, State Representative Peggy Sayers (D-Windsor Locks), co-chair of the Public Health Committee, and advocates for patients and the elderly, Secretary Bysiewicz said this registry will provide "comfort and peace of mind for people and their families, who will know that this critical information is stored in a safe location and can be instantly accessible to health care providers who may need it."

"This will be a 24-hour a day, seven-day a week service for any family member or health care provider who needs to access it. The Advance Health Care Directive Registry will give anyone who signs up for it a card to keep in their wallet, much like an organ donor card. That card will have a web-address and password that can be accessed by medical personnel to determine immediately what a patient's medical needs and wishes are," Secretary Bysiewicz said today. "For example, if someone is in an accident and far from home, that person's advance care directive would be unknown to emergency doctors and personnel onhand. But with the registry card, those wishes can be found quickly online in our registry and at any time of day, and the family can

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have peace of mind in knowing that their loved one's needs and wishes are being met.

"This has been described by some as a virtual filing cabinet. Only this also comes with the safeguard of a password, so only the appropriate people can access this vital information," Secretary Bysiewicz added. "We want people to know this is a secure way to store personal information to which medical personnel may someday need access."

"This virtual vault ensures that medical needs are met and dying wishes are kept," Attorney General Blumenthal said. "A secure databank allows doctors and families to make decisions without risk of dangerous delay. Medical care and end-of-life decisions should be made with dignity and certainty. This registry will provide and protect private information and peace of mind."

Two other states - Arizona and North Carolina - currently offer Advance Care Directive Registries, and growing numbers of people in those states who are opting to store their vital healthcare documents on these registries show the necessity of such a resource being in place, Secretary Bysiewicz said. Additionally, legislation creating a registry has been approved in Vermont, and the idea is being talked about in California.

Secretary Bysiewicz thanked State Senator Chris Murphy (D-Southington) and State Representative Peggy Sayers (D-Windsor Locks), co-chairs of the Legislature's Public Health Committee, for agreeing to raise this bill in their committee once session begins later this week. She also thanked Janice Favreau of South Windsor, whose Senior Thesis at the University of Hartford involved Advance Health Care Directives and who initially contacted the Secretary of the State's office with the idea of creating a registry for Advance Health Care Directives.

## **STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED “ADVANCE HEALTH CARE DIRECTIVE REGISTRY”**

“As public officials we should take steps to ensure emergency access to personal medical documents, especially ones as vital as living wills or the power of attorney. The Secretary of the State's proposed registry simplifies this process for medical providers to carry out a patient's wishes and goes far to ease the peace of mind for loved ones. This proposal reminds me of the success we had in creating and implementing New England's first up and running online organ donor database, clarifying legal commitments and access to important medical information.”

*- Speaker of the House Jim Amann (D-Milford)*

“This is a great step forward in the ability to access critical information in time of emergencies. We congratulate those who have worked so hard on this potentially life-saving registry.”

*- Senate President Pro Tem Don Williams (D-Brooklyn)*

“Families often find themselves under great strain when forced to make traumatic end-of-life care decisions for their loved ones. It makes sense that the state should partner with families to help make this decision a little more clear.”

*- State Senator Chris Murphy (D-Southington)  
Co-Chair, Public Health Committee*

“The implementation and use of an online registry for these Advanced Health Care Directives will not only relieve family members of having to make an “on the spot” decision for their loved one, because those instructions will be clearly recorded in advance, but it will also make those instructions quickly and easily accessible by the medical personnel who need to determine what treatment to provide to the patient who cannot speak for his or herself.”

*- Janice Favreau  
(Janice Favreau did her Senior Thesis at the University of Hartford on Advance Health Care Directives, and helped bring this issue to Secretary Bysiewicz's attention)*

“I think it's wonderful when a constituent brings an idea to government and government acts on that idea, making life better for everyone. That's real democracy in action,” state Sen. Gary D. LeBeau (D-East Hartford) said. “I give Janice Favreau a lot of credit for making this proposal, and I look forward to moving in through the House and Senate and seeing it passed into law.”

*- State Senator Gary LeBeau (D-East Hartford)*

“Advance Care Planning and Advance Health Care Directives are extremely important for all adults. They allow individuals to make treatment choices when they are no longer able to speak for themselves. They can relieve the burden of making decisions under pressure and can avoid conflicts over treatment options at the end of

life. Advance Care Planning is most easily accomplished during periods of stable health. The new initiative by the State of Connecticut to create an Advance Care Directive Registry would make individual's Advance Directives readily available in times of need to family and healthcare providers throughout the state and beyond. Directives would be available at all times and in circumstances where the paper copy of an Advance Health Care Directive might not be easily accessible. This registry would provide an additional resource to improve the healthcare of the citizens of the state."

- *Barbara B. Blechner, J.D., M.Ed.*  
*Associate Professor, Division of Medical*  
*Humanities, Health Law and Ethics*  
*Department of Community Medicine*  
*University of Connecticut School of Medicine*

"Secretary of the State Bysiewicz is undertaking a task of critical importance to the patient community in Connecticut. Now they will be able to rest easy with the knowledge that their family will know where to find their advanced directive. The Internet is a remarkably important tool that helps disabled people stay connected even when they are isolated in their homes. Secretary Bysiewicz is using that tool to the fullest, to the great benefit of the public she so well serves."

- *Jennifer Jaff, Esq.*  
*Executive Director*  
*Advocacy For Patients With Chronic Illness, Inc.*