

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
Gotham Center, 42-09 28th Street, CN 31  
Long Island City, NY 11101-4132

RE: Proposed Guidelines for Access to Public Vital Records

Dear Commission Members,

We, as members of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society community, strongly object to the proposed rules regarding access to public birth and death records of New York City.

Our organization was founded in 1869, and since that time has worked to discover, share, and preserve the stories of New York families. Our work stretches across the United States—and in fact the entire world—as we tell the stories of millions of immigrants who passed through New York as well as the families who have made New York their permanent home.

Access to these original materials are **critical and essential** for our work. The proposed restrictions would create an excessive interference for myself and my fellow members seeking to trace their families within New York City's vital records.

We ask that the commission consider the following guidelines for access to public records, namely:

- Access to birth records after 75 years (if the individual's death can be verified) or 105 years if no death date is verified.
- Access to death records after 50 years; or after 25 years to registered members of a New York genealogical society.
- Access to the index to death records after 25 years (providing the name, date of death, place of death, date of birth, and burial/cremation information).

Beyond genealogical research, many of our peers and colleagues require access to these records when tracing medical histories within their family—specifically those related to genetically inherited diseases. Access to these records is essential for those seeking to understand and treat medical conditions. Therefore, we ask that you consider creating an informational copy of birth and death records, which could not prove identity for financial and other transactions, but would instead provide the information necessary for researchers.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincere regards,

<NAME>

<CITY AND STATE>