

February 10, 2026

Senator Liz Krueger
Senator Thomas F. O'Mara
Standing Committee on Finance
New York State Senate

Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow
Standing Committee on Ways and Means
New York State Assembly

RE: Bureau of Vital Records Funding, FY 2027 New York Executive Budget

Dear Chair Krueger, Senator O'Mara, and Chair Pretlow,

On behalf of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (NYG&B)—the oldest and largest genealogical society in New York State—and our constituents, **I am writing to express our strong support for the Governor's proposal to invest \$7 million to modernize New York's vital records program**, including digitizing archival records for genealogical requests, addressing long-standing backlogs for record requests, and improving operational efficiency for future requests.

As President and CEO of the NYG&B—a private nonprofit organization with a mission to preserve, document, and share family history and stories from across New York State—I'd like to share how this increased funding is a welcomed step toward better vital records access for our community and fellow New Yorkers.

The millions of birth, marriage, and death records overseen by the New York State Department of Health (DOH) are essential building blocks for genealogists, historians, and anyone else researching their New York history, including:

- Descendants of refugees or Holocaust survivors who made New York their home and are trying to connect with their family history.
- A New Yorker whose parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents immigrated to New York and is attempting to access critical information that often provides the only details on lineage and place of origin.
- A New Yorker looking to learn more about their family's connection to the American Revolution or the New Netherland colony and is seeking access to records for their own grandparents and other family members.

- An individual attempting to settle the estate of a recently deceased relative and trying to access records for insurance and probate purposes.

The proposed \$7 million to make technological improvements and increase staffing to address vital record backlogs represents positive progress toward reducing barriers and ensuring people can conduct meaningful research.

We would urge, however, that the proposed funding does not come with any restrictions that hamper vital record access or harm the research abilities of New Yorkers. For example, we would like to see clear language attached to the appropriation that, at a minimum, aligns with the existing guidelines from the DOH when providing uncertified copies for genealogy purposes.¹

Overall, we are very supportive of this proposed funding, and we are in alignment with other organizations and leaders in the genealogy and family history field that endorse this effort for addressing the issue, including the Association of Professional Genealogists.

Last February, I testified before the New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing: Health/Medicaid, providing recommendations and solutions so New Yorkers can have continued access to New York State vital records. I am grateful to the legislators and elected officials who listened to my concerns about the negative effects of a proposed NY 2026 budget and bill amendment that would have further blocked access to New York State vital records, which was ultimately removed.

This new proposal of \$7 million now represents an opportunity for responding positively to this long-standing issue, and a chance for advancing a solution for digitizing New York's vital records and making them accessible to the public. We urge the Legislature to keep this funding in the final 2027 budget as well as request further transparency for how it will be allocated and used. The NYG&B stands ready to assist the State in efforts to digitize records and deliver a modern, sustainable, and equitable vital records-access system for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely

D. Joshua Taylor
President & CEO
New York Genealogical and Biographical Society

¹ New York State Department of Health, "Genealogy Records & Resources," New York State Department of Health, accessed February 10, 2026, https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/genealogy.htm.