



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

Select Committee on Children
Program Review and Investigation Committee
Public Hearing
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Testimony Submitted by Elizabeth C. Brown
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Raised Bill 174, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Department of Children and Families.

Senator Myer, Representative McMahon, Representative Wasserman, and members of the Committee:

My name is Elizabeth C. Brown and I am here today to testify in support of the recommendations of Program Review and Investigation Committee to improve the Department in meeting its obligations to children and families. My testimony hopes to strengthen the recommendations by requiring a results based accountability model for strategic planning and enhanced oversight and accountability through a stronger State Advisory Council under the jurisdiction of the Select Committee of Children.

Implement Results Based Accountability Model of Strategic Planning:

The major recommendation in the proposed legislation requires DCF to develop a single, comprehensive strategic plan to meet the needs of the children and families served by the Department. In order to ensure that the plan is focused on population outcomes instead of delineating what services are being available or how many children and families are served, the plan should be developed in a **results based accountability process**. This will move the thinking in the Department from the traditional mindset of setting goals that are not necessarily linked to the actual population analysis for more effective service delivery system.

Focus on Regional Planning with Community and Family Partners:

Overall, the language in the bill should direct DCF to bring its strategic partners together in each region, including providers, parents, health professionals, neighborhood leaders, local elected officials, school officials, police, and others to engage in the RBA process to determine what are the action steps to improve the outcomes for children and families in the context of helping families become effective parents and achieve a level of economic self sufficiency and at the same time helping children and youth reach optimal health, and developmental milestones.

The Department of Children and Families can greatly improve its effectiveness by building strong local and regional partners. Several innovative programs administered by DCF including the Break Through Program and the Differential Response System that have demonstrated success in improving outcomes should be the priority. Priorities should be based on what works, not on what “we’ve always done” mentality. The Department cannot do this work alone. They need to adopt a new paradigm of doing business, one that includes population outcomes and accountability and working with community partners.

Enhanced Role for the State Advisory Council and the Select Committee on Children

In addition, the State Advisory Council on Children and Families needs to be under the jurisdiction of the Select Committee on Children and DCF should be mandated to report in a timely fashion on all aspects of implementation of the plan. This will help put in place oversight and accountability of the Department in an ongoing, timely manner. There should be sufficient staff and expertise on the Council to act as a resource to the Department and assist in the implementation of the strategic plans.

Unified School District

The Unified School District which serves children and youth in DCF care in many different residential settings including, Connecticut Juvenile Training School, Riverview Hospital, High Meadows, and CT Children’s Place should also work with the Council to ensure quality of services and educational outcomes for the children in their programs.

In conclusion, I hope this is an opportunity for the Department of Children and Families to embrace a new way of doing business that focuses on population outcomes and one that partners with families and communities. The Commission looks forward to working with this Committee and the Department in charting a new course that improves the lives of children and families in Connecticut.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you this morning.