

TESTIMONY OF ABIGAIL ANDERSON  
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JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
RAISED BILL NO. 5700  
AN ACT CONCERNING JUSTICE FOR ALL CHILDREN

I am Abby Anderson and I am the Senior Policy Associate at Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I am submitting this testimony today on behalf of the Alliance to support *Raised Bill No. 5700, An Act Concerning Justice For All Children*.

This proposal is an effort to provide that the Judicial Department, DCF, Division of Public Defender Services, Department of Public Safety and representatives from local education agency and the municipal police department develop and implement race neutral criteria for decisions made at each stage in the juvenile justice system. These criteria will be based solely on the risk the child poses to the community. It will be developed in accordance with the Annie E. Casey Foundation<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative in order to evaluate detention admissions to assure race neutrality in decision making and whether the decisions are made ascertaining risk to community.

The Alliance is in support of this bill because Connecticut has one of the most severe problems of disproportionate minority representation in the nation. While children and youth of color represent only 23% of persons under age eighteen in the overall population, they represent almost 73% of the population in detention. State studies have shown that African-American youth and Latino youth are likely to be overrepresented at each stage of the juvenile justice process, more likely to be detained prior to a hearing and more likely to be placed in a State correctional institution. It is important Connecticut address this problem by establishing race neutral criteria to monitor and track decisions being made in the juvenile justice system. The development of objective criteria for decision making has been proven effective for the reduction of juvenile disproportionate minority representation for numerous jurisdictions throughout the country.

It is for these reasons the Alliance respectfully requests that this committee approve this proposal. The Alliance would also like to formally support Raised Bill 5699, *An Act Concerning The Implementation Of Certain Requirements Protecting Children Of Families With Services Needs*. This bill would establish a committee to implement the decriminalization of the FWSN cases. We also support Raised Bill 5731, *An Act Concerning Detention and Leave In The Juvenile Justice System*. This change would give detained juveniles the same right to time credit as adults and would provide discretion to the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families to waive that 60 day period when a child is transferred from one facility to another. Finally, the Alliance also supports Raised Bill 667, *An Act Concerning Determinations Of Competency In Juvenile Matters*. This proposal sets 9 as the minimum age for a presumption of competency and sets out different procedures for kids when they are found not restorable and allows the court to order restoration to competency in the least restrictive available program. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families.