



DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
TESTIMONY
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
APRIL 4, 2007



H.B. No. 5676 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN OF FAMILIES WITH SERVICE NEEDS

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding H.B. No. 5676 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN OF FAMILIES WITH SERVICE NEEDS. This bill would revise requirements for proceedings concerning Families With Service Needs (FWSN) and also establishes "Family Support Centers" to provide services for children and families against whom a FWSN referral.

As you know, the General Assembly enacted Public Act 05-250 which mandates that as of October 1, 2007, judges cannot place FWSN youth in the State's three Juvenile Detention Centers or adjudicate them delinquent solely for violating a court's FWSN order. Last year, the General Assembly enacted Public Act 06-188 which established a Families With Service Needs Advisory Board. The FWSN Advisory Board has met over the past year to monitor the progress being made in the implementation of the requirements of Public Act 05-250 and has provided advice to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Judicial Branch's Court Support Service Division (CSSD) with respect to such implementation.

DCF and CSSD collaborated on the development of a budget option to develop the programs and services necessary to address the needs of the FWSN population. The Governor's Recommended Budget includes \$3.5 million in each year of the biennium in the Judicial Branch's budget to implement the Families with Service Needs Diversion Program in response to Public Act 05-250. The recommended funding provides CSSD with four positions and the resources needed to begin implementing this program. In addition to the establishment of family support centers, a number of respite and residential beds will be made available in lieu of detention.

We would point out that some aspects of these changes are not fully predictable. While we expect that these efforts will better meet the needs of the FWSN youth and their families, there will be a need for assessment of these new policy directions. The Department welcomes the opportunity to work with the FWSN Advisory Board and the General Assembly in the roll out of the new program and services and the implementation of Public Act 05-280.