

TESTIMONY OF SHANICE MAXWELL

**APRIL 4, 2007
PUBLIC HEARING
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

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

Good afternoon my name is Shanice Maxwell. I am here to ask you to consider bill 5676 that would provide services to young people before their lives spiral out of control like mine did. My life was never perfect. When I was 6 my family was investigated for physically abusing me and the Department of Children and Families put me in a program to keep me busy, but when I entered 6th grade my life really got difficult. By that time I really believed that my mother wished that I had never been born. I was beginning to feel the same way.

In school other girls found me an easy target and really began to pick on me. I started skipping school, going to the mall with friends and staying out all night. Thinking back, my life seems like a blur. I was 12 and out of control. I could not live with my mother, we hated each other, so I was jumping from one house to another. No one was there to help me mediate the conflicts between me and my mother. There was no one to turn to to help me, and no place to go. I was making decisions all alone and putting myself in danger.

I recently learned that at some point the school filed a Family with Service Needs Petition because I was skipping school? I wasn't interested in school at all and there were no interventions or programs to help me get back into school and help me deal with my home life. Unfortunately, before I went to court for the FWSN, I picked up delinquency charges for trespassing.

One morning after really getting mad at my mother I decided to get drunk. I stole a beer from home and brought it to school. I think I was trying to get back at my mother. What ended up happening was that I was suspended and then expelled for bringing the beer to school. Even though I was expelled I still went to the school almost daily to pick up my brother. One day while picking up my brother I got arrested for trespassing. Probation and parole rules are strict and there are a lot of them. I was angry and was used to not having any structure in my life. The next few years I violated the rules of probation, ran from programs they put me in, and picked up lots of charges. I was finally committed delinquent for 18 months for threatening and spent time in three different residential programs. It wasn't till I found a safe, structured place that I was able to find something I had always known, but had forgotten during the last few years. I remembered that I wanted to be someone and that I could

be someone. I have graduated from Hartford Adult education and I hope to be a nurse one day soon, but I can't help thinking that if I could have gotten some help early in 6th grade the last 6 years could have been really different and a lot easier. The kind of help that could have made a difference for me in the 6th grade would have been someone that helped me feel better about myself, which could have given me the strength to say no, a mentor. I needed help with my family, so that we all could get along and I needed a safe place to go when we all needed a break from each other. I now know that I needed more structure and I needed my family to provide it.