

Good evening Chairman Lawlor, Chairman McDonald and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Brian Anderson. I am a lobbyist for Council 4 AFSCME.

Council 4 wishes to urge your caution in dealing with HB 7151, AAC the Closure of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and the Establishment of Regional Training, Rehabilitation and Education Centers. Our members have serious doubts that the replacement facilities will ever be built. If this bill is to pass, we ask that language be amended mandating that CJTS not close until these replacement facilities are completed and adequately staffed. It is sadly necessary for the state to retain secure facilities. Attempts to have nonprofit facilities meet all of the needs of these adjudicated youth have been unsuccessful. Some children have a propensity to violence, and strong emotional and physical outbursts. We urge that any new secure state facilities be made as friendly and humane for juveniles as possible to assist them into transitioning back into the community. We also urge that no child without a strong need to be in a secure facility ever be forced to grow up in one. We ask for you to be very cautious on this bill and hope that we can learn from the past mistakes of early facility closings.

Sandy Dearborn, our DCF worker local's president, testified before the Judiciary Committee prior to the closure of the girls' Long Lane facility in 2003 and urged the committee not to let this facility close without first opening a state run secure facility to care for girls in need of a secure, protected environment. She warned at that time that "if there is no bottom-line facility for such young people, they will wind up in adult prison" as they have in states such as New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Florida. Sadly, our plea was not listened to and many young girls have been imprisoned at the York Correctional Facility, an adult prison. As the press recently pointed out, the numbers of girls admitted during the past few years has increased, since the state has lacked secure beds for them. Many of the girls who have been sent to York Corrections had no history of violence or threatening, but simply needed to be in a facility to keep them from being a danger to themselves (truancy, runaways). We feel that in the community interest we should allow legislators to assist in the decision making of closing facilities operated the Department of Children and Families.

I would be happy to answer any questions.