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**TESTIMONY OF STEVEN BERKOWITZ, M.D.  
IN SUPPORT OF BILL NO. 5676,  
AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN OF FAMILIES WITH SERVICE NEEDS  
April 4, 2007**

My name is Steven Berkowitz and I am a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Assistant Professor at the Yale School of Medicine Child Study Center and the Medical Director of the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence. I am here to testify in support of H. B. No. 5676 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN OF FAMILIES WITH SERVICE NEEDS.

From 1996-2005, I was the psychiatric consultant to the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center and since 2002, I have directed a home based psychiatric service for youth referred by Juvenile Probation—IICAPS ACT. In the detention center the majority of the youth with whom I worked seemed to be in detention due to a violation of their FWSN orders and in IICAPS the majority are receiving probation services due to their FWSN status. In my experience, these youth have a chronic history of exposure to violence and other traumatic experiences and typically come from underprivileged and multi-problem families and the request for a FWSN, whether initiated by schools or families is an attempt to obtain help for an emotionally and behaviorally disturbed child and unaware and ineffective parents. The FWSN request is not made with the intent to criminalize, incarcerate or punish these children. It is a last ditch attempt to obtain help and support. Unfortunately the resources that are currently available to optimize the outcomes for these youth are inadequate and few receive the comprehensive evaluation that includes their intellectual, academic, familial and their environmental needs. Even fewer subsequently receive the services, interventions and treatments from the youth development, educational or mental health systems than address their complex issues in a realistic and effective manner.

This bill addresses these concerns by providing the resources to implement Public Act 05-250, which prohibits the incarceration of youth solely for violating court orders. This is crucial as research has shown that the incarceration of these vulnerable youth increases rather than decreases the likelihood of future delinquent activity.

It creates the very resources so necessary to optimizing these children's potential by establishing community-based Family Support Centers that assess and provide the needed services. Importantly, this bill ensures the appropriate consequences for incorrigible behavior and places the right children in the CT. Juvenile Justice System and allows for the appropriate use of limited resources available to this system

Respectfully submitted,



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