



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
February 26, 2007**

**House Bill 6816, An Act Concerning Private Hearings And Confidential
Records And Papers In Family Relations Matters**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in opposition to **House Bill 6816, An Act Concerning Private Hearings and Confidential Records and Papers in Family Relations Matters.**

This bill would provide that, upon motion of a party or counsel for a minor child, any family case must be held in a courtroom from which the public and the press have been excluded, unless the court determines that the public interest requires that the matter not be private. It would also require that records and other papers in family relations matters be confidential, except upon order of the court.

This proposal is inconsistent with the guiding principle of the Judicial Branch's Public Access Task Force -- that all judicial proceedings are presumed to be open to the public.

The law currently permits a judge to order the closure of a family relations matter if he or she determines that the welfare of any child involved or the nature of the case requires confidentiality. This statutory scheme does not presume a closed courtroom, but allows for it when appropriate. As the current framework adequately balances the rights of the parties and public, the Judicial Branch opposes this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.