

Testimony in Support of BILL SB902

My name is Judy Meucci. I live in Quaker Hill. I am here today because I have lost my daughter. In large part, the current laws in Connecticut, (or lack there of), for youths have completely enabled, what experts have called, a “family cult” to take her away from us. You can call them whatever you would like, religious fundamentalists, a new religious movement, or just a different kind of family that has there own church in a room above their garage. A little over a year ago we were The Meuccis, party of four. Today it’s a party of three. The current Youth In Crisis statutes have been described to me by many as a “gray area”. It is more like a black hole sucking 16 and 17 year olds into the abyss. With any luck most of our youths will not learn of these laws and slip through the cracks in order to live normal lives and complete school and then become adults. In my case, very deceptive people that had one goal in mind, getting Heather, educated my daughter. I have become very bitter over this past year since I lost Heather.

In the two instances that we were able to, thanks to the Probate Court, try to get medical attention for Heather, she was diagnosed with a Dissociative Disorder to name one diagnosis. In short, she was brainwashed. After the small amount of time that we had to get this help we had been stopped wholly by these current laws, allowing these predators to tear her away from us once again. There was nothing legally we could do. She was brainwashed enough that power was disabled from my house, a window was broken out, and the phone lines were shut off just to get to her. But you know what? It was all legal. She is currently allowed to do what she wants. It doesn’t matter if she needed help, medical or otherwise.

I didn’t want sympathy. All I wanted was help. The current YIC laws are so gray that depending on how they are interpreted or by whom, you go into a spin, but in the end 16 and 17 year olds are nothing. No one wants to touch these kids. Yes, they are still kids. There is no protection what so ever. No one is looking out for their well being at all! The police can’t protect them, the court can’t, child protection can’t, and most importantly, their parents can’t.

I have contacted or tried to contact many law enforcement and state officials for help. Admittedly, I have begged. Some of you have tried within your powers to help and believe me I appreciate everything. But if I can’t even get the child advocate for this state to return my calls because my daughter is 16-years old, then what else is there? Basically we have been denied, rejected, or flat out ignored because of the current YIC laws. You now know why I have become so bitter. You can only get beat down so many times. You try to sit back and restrain yourself while you watch your child drive off in a cab at the juvenile court house on May 15, 2006, never to be heard from again.

There must be a reason that only 3 states in the United States have such a law in place. It’s wrong. It’s a disgrace. How can this state justify this law? Connecticut does not allow children under 18 to work past 10:00 p.m., or buy a lottery ticket to name a few. Connecticut also does not allow children under 18, to get their drivers license, drop out of school, pierce their ears, tan in a tanning salon, get a tattoo, etc. without parental consent. They can’t get medical attention without parental consent but they must also give consent. The country does not allow you to vote, or join the armed services until you are 18. You can’t even watch an “R” rated movie until you are 17 years old.

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We do not disagree with these laws. Are they in place because of the risks or dangers involved, or is it that we feel that children this age cannot make these decisions on their own without parental consent because of their maturity level? How does the State of Connecticut justify letting our 16 and 17 year olds have the power to make the decision on where they will live? Is it in their best interest and safety? If there is a question on the child's safety then why does the Department of Children and Families not have any power to help either?

Obviously it is the budget that dictates which direction this law will go. If budget is the issue then they should eliminate the Youth In Crisis statutes all together. How much does this state spend in vain for the Youth In Crisis law? Maybe we should tally up the costs of all status offenders that have taken up the courts time, have court appointed Attorneys, Guardians, probation officers, and police time and see what we could save. I would like to know who has actually benefited from this law. The current Youth In Crisis Statutes are ineffective. Why have them? If we are going to spend \$0.50, why not spend a dollar? I have been told that the Youth In Crisis statutes are only patching a whole in the boat. This boat is sinking. How can we have the age of majority at 16 when these children aren't allowed to even get their ears pierced? How?

Or maybe, we could use some of the billion dollars in funds that Governor Rell claims to have in her rainy day fund that she boasted about so much during her campaign to make these laws whole. She did seem very concerned for our childrens welfare as she held her grandchild.

Currently there is no punishment in place for a youth who violates any orders placed on them by a judge. So, if you are a youth, no need to worry if you don't comply. Oddly enough, if I understand the proposed bill, it seems to end the same, "A youth in crisis found to be in violation of any order under this section shall not be considered to be delinquent and shall not be punished by the court by incarceration in any state-operated detention facility or correctional facility." I hope I am interpreting this wrong because this must change.

My daughter has now turned 17. She has a ninth grade education. It's going on a year since I've heard from her. The last I heard this family cult or whatever you want to call them, are all slowly relocating to one of the other 3 states that have this type of law in place, North Carolina. There is now nothing we can do but sit back and watch and wait, and pray for her safety. I've learned a lot this past year. All bad. One thing that I've learned from people in recovery from the same problems as my daughter, it took them years, (7 to 15 in some cases), to realize on their own what was happening to them. Then, they went for medical help. We had the opportunity to get this help right away, but it was stripped away from us. Without eminent physical harm per the statute we could not get a judge to sign a restraining order to keep these people away even while she was hospitalized or in a specialized treatment facility.

Sadly enough she could be helped, completely, if there was only some way. This has to change. Gary and Judy Meucci were not finished raising their daughter yet! But the State of Connecticut, I guess, feels as though we have. Thank you for that.

Maybe you weren't here when these laws were put into place but you are here now and you have the power to correct this terrible, disgraceful law that is tearing families apart and ruining childrens futures.