



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

**EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment  
Human Services Committee Public Hearing  
March 11, 2008**

**House Bill 5908, An Act Concerning Proceedings And Operations Of The  
Department of Children and Families**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in opposition, in part, to **House Bill 5908, *An Act Concerning Proceedings and Operations of the Department of Children and Families***. More specifically, the Branch opposes sections that create a rebuttable presumption favoring grandparents and other blood relatives in regards to caring for a child.

As members of the Committee may be aware, any relative - including grandparents - are regularly investigated very quickly to determine whether their home would be suitable for the children. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) will investigate anyone that the parent asks to be investigated, and often investigates relatives who come forward even if the parents haven't asked.

It is imperative, however, particularly if the relative seeks foster care benefits or guardianship subsidies from the state, that they meet federal qualifying requirements which are ascertained during the investigation. Furthermore, it is unclear as to what would occur if a number of relatives filed to intervene and seek custody; who would be afforded the presumption in this scenario?

Under current law, children are frequently placed with suitable relatives very quickly. As this proposal unnecessarily elevates too wide a variety of individuals to a status of presumptive fitness, and would have reimbursement implications for them, we would respectfully request that the Committee not take action on this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.