



State of Connecticut

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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

MARCH 17, 2008

H.B. 5837, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE PLACEMENT OF DELINQUENT SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE TRAINING SCHOOL

The Office of Chief Public Defender opposes H.B. 5837, An Act Prohibiting the Placement of Delinquent Sixteen and Seventeen-Year-Old Children in the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and urges the Committee to reject this proposal. Juvenile justice practitioners from a variety of state, municipal and private entities are planning for the historic implementation of P.A. 07-4, which raised the jurisdictional age for juvenile court jurisdiction. The Office of Chief Public Defender believes that effective preparation for this important change is underway and that this proposal is not in the best interest of the children in the system. Prohibiting the placement of 16 and 17 year olds at CJTS will not improve therapeutic outcomes and is not economically efficient. This proposal unnecessarily restricts the efforts of the Department of Children and Families to treat and rehabilitate committed delinquent boys.

According to the most recent report from the CJTS Advisory Board, more than one half of the residents in custody at CJTS in 2007 were 16 or 17 year olds. The facility provides education, therapy and vocational training for both these boys and those 15 and under. The boys are separated by age for some activities but are together for recreation and certain other facility programming. The Office of Chief Public Defender is a member of the CJTS Advisory Board, which receives monthly updates on the facility. There is no indication that the age demographic of the residents causes systemic or even significant individualized problems.

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**Christine Rapillo, Director of Juvenile Delinquent Defense/
Executive Assistant Public Defender, Office of Chief Public Defender**
**H.B. 5837, An Act Prohibiting the Placement of Delinquent Sixteen and Seventeen-Year-
Old Children in the Connecticut Juvenile Training School**

This proposal would force the construction of a new secure facility for 16 and 17 year olds. Given current population estimates, this is unnecessary. CJTS was built to house over 200 boys. Over the year the census at CJTS has remained stable with under 100 boys. DCF has estimated that they can accommodate the influx of older youth by reconfiguring the facility and adding on to one unit being used for a Boys and Girls Club. CJTS was too large when it was built and large facilities have been shown to be one of the least effective means of treating delinquent youth. However, the reconfiguration plan, if implemented as proposed, will break the current structure up into smaller communities, based on the age and need of the boys. This will be a significant step forward in improving the programming and treatment for these youth.

Building an entirely new facility for the older youth will use up resources that are better spent on improving assessments and enhancing community based aftercare programs. The Department of Children and Families has begun to plan for the influx of a higher number of older youth. A vocational reentry program has been added and the educational support program had been expanded. Helping boys reintegrate into their communities is the best way to improve outcomes and reduce recidivism. The state's limited resources should be spent on these programs and not on constructing new facilities.

The Office of Chief Public Defender urges the Committee on the Judiciary to reject this proposal.