



**TESTIMONY OF ABIGAIL ANDERSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR
CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
MARCH 17, 2008**

**RAISED HOUSE BILL NO. 5926
AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILIES WITH SERVICE NEEDS, CERTIFICATES OF
BIRTH RESULTING IN STILLBIRTH, REENTRY AND DIVERSIONARY SERVICES
FOR YOUTH, AND DRUG COURTS FOR YOUTH.**

I am Abby Anderson, Executive Director for the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance would like to submit the following testimony in favor of H.B. 5926: An Act Concerning Families With Service Needs, Certificates of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth, Reentry and Diversionary Services for Youth, and Drug Courts for Youth.

Our support for certain portions of this bill is related to three areas that were recommended by the Families With Service Needs Advisory Board: (1) Youth Service Bureaus and Juvenile Review Boards; (2) Pilot Truancy Reduction Initiatives; and (3) FWSN procedural changes. The Alliance also supports new pilot diversion and reentry services for youth and the creation of a group to study drug courts for youth.

As you know, the legislatively-created FWSN Board's charge was to research and determine how to respond to those children who fall under the category of Families with Service Needs, because they can no longer legally be put in a locked secure facility for violating probation. I will address each area separately.

First, the Alliance strongly supports the proposal to fund Youth Service Bureaus in four Judicial Districts to expand their ability to serve FWSN cases through Juvenile Review Boards. Youth Service Bureaus (YSB) are multi-purpose, community-based services providing a variety of prevention, intervention and treatment services. Many YSBs around the state operate Juvenile Review Boards (JRB). Juvenile Review Boards are community-based court diversion programs that address school, family and minor criminal issues. Local professionals sit on these boards and offer juveniles a positive alternative to juvenile court referral. These interventions can reduce court involvement, thereby increasing overall system savings.

Second, the Alliance strongly supports the proposal to fund and establish Truancy Reduction Initiatives. Currently about 50% of FWSN referrals are a result of truancy. The pilot truancy reduction initiatives recommended by the FWSN Advisory Board would allow the State Department of Education to identify and establish truancy prevention initiatives in partnership with *three to five local school districts that have the highest number of FWSN referrals*. These initiatives would include district-wide and child-specific interventions that are proven to work, such as: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), and school-based truancy Prevention Teams that will oversee up to three levels of appropriate graduated interventions