



City of New Britain

New Britain, Connecticut 06051

*"New Britain:
A City for
All People"*

March 17, 2008

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawler, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of **Bill No. 5926**. My name is Christopher Montes. I represent the City of New Britain's Youth and Family Services as well as the Connecticut Youth Services Association, the network of 100 Youth Service Bureaus serving 134 cities and towns across the state of Connecticut. Today I am testifying in support of **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** as proposed (in part) in the Family With Service Needs Advisory Board's report to the Connecticut General Assembly.

As a professional in the field of service to youth and families for 27 years, 20 in my current capacity for the City of New Britain, I am in full agreement that FWSN children and youth need truancy prevention and intervention services as well as diversion programs that will keep them out of the juvenile justice system. Sections six (6) and seven (7) of the bill speak to the FWSN Advisory Boards recommendations to implement both a pilot program for truancy reduction for three (3) to five (5) of Connecticut's communities as well as Juvenile Review Board enhancements for four existing Youth Service Bureaus to provide diversionary services for FWSN behavior children and youth. As an example, New Britain's Youth Service Bureau has begun to take on FWSN referrals and has doubled its JRB caseload. This has been without additional funds or staff, and though successful, and has thus far resulted in the need for additional case management services and community collaboration to make appropriate interventions. While I am aware that the four larger cities in the state were recently funded for JRBs with other state dollars, the current Bill No. 5926 provides for State Department of Education funding specifically for Youth Service Bureaus which have historically pioneered the JRB model which has shown to have significant results in at least two independent studies.

Under the existing State Statute Section 10-19m, Youth Service Bureaus are statutorily charged with the responsibility to provide "evaluation, planning, coordination, and implementation of services, including prevention and intervention programs for delinquent, pre-delinquent, pregnant, parenting and troubled youth referred to such bureaus by schools, police, juvenile courts, adult courts, parents, and self-referrals. A Youth Service Bureau shall be the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment, and follow-up services ...such services shall be designed to meet the needs of youth by the diversion of troubled youth from the juvenile justice system...."

New Britain, like other midsized cities statewide, shares a burden of FWSN behavior children and youth that are severely at risk for shifting from status offenses to more criminal activities such as substance abuse and drug sales, gang-like violence, robbery, larceny, and a host of other harmful and illegal acts. Bill No. 5926, particularly with truancy intervention in three (3) to five (5) school districts and four (4) YSB/JRB enhancements for FWSN youth will make a measurable difference in the lives of young people and certainly by the lessening referral numbers to our juvenile courts.

Thank You,

Christopher L. Montes, M.A., N.C.P., F.D.C.
Administrator of Community Services Division, City of New Britain
At Large Representative, Connecticut Youth Services Association