



Community Providers Association
Caring for Connecticut.

March 11, 2008

To: Human Services Committee
From: Terry Edelstein, President/CEO
Re: **H. B. No. 5908 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PROCEEDING AND OPERATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.**

Please accept this testimony for the record.

The Connecticut Community Providers Association represents organizations that provide services and supports for people with disabilities and significant needs including children and adults with substance use disorders, mental illness, developmental, and physical disabilities.

The Department of Children and Families contracts with community providers for a full array of services in order to meet the varied needs of Connecticut's children and families. Included in this spectrum of services are levels of care in which the children live in a provider operated facilities such as safe homes, various types of group homes and residential treatment facilities. Some of the children in these facilities and homes have complex behavioral health needs, while others are simply in need of a safe place to live. **Regardless of the classification of any of these children, the fact remains that these are children who are best served in community-based settings close to their homes.**

Section 1 of H.B. 5908 would be extremely problematic for the system of DCF funded residential care. The provision that the legislative body of a municipality must approve any change in operation, feeds into the prejudice and discrimination against these children that builds in many communities prior to their experience with such facilities. Community providers and DCF often have to fight long difficult battles against such "not in my backyard" mentalities. The

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only loser in these battles are the children who may have to be diverted to alternative, less appropriate levels of care while they wait to see if the facility, designed to be their home is able to open.

Section 2 of H.B. 5908 requires that DCF licensed residential facilities comply with “state statute, regulation and local” safety and noise ordinances. We do this as part of our mission to provide the best possible care for the children we serve, but also to be good neighbors in our communities. **Complying with state and local ordinances doesn’t need to be further legislated.**

We urge this committee to reject the language in Section 1 of H.B. 5908 as a barrier to meeting the needs of Connecticut’s most vulnerable children and to also reject Section 2 of the bill as being unnecessary.

Thank you for your time and attention.