STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

CHAMBERS OF
BARBARA M. QUINN, JUDGE
CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR

231 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106

Testimony of Judge Barbara M. Quinn
Chief Court Administrator
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
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Senate Bill 624, An Act Concerning Increases in the Compensation of Judges, Family Support Magistrates and Referees

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in support of **Senate Bill 624,** ***An Act Concerning Increases in the Compensation of Judges, Family Support Magistrates and Referees.***

The Judicial Branch supports this bill, which contains the recommendations of the Commission on Compensation of Judges and Elected Officials. The Commission has recommended that the Legislature adopt a new mechanism for determining the compensation of judges and elected officials – a mechanism that would link increases in their salaries to those granted to state managers.

As you know, judges' salaries are established by statute. This means that no judge can receive a salary increase unless the Legislature acts to increase the amount specified in the statute. While most state employees receive salary increases based upon established schedules, judges do not receive periodic merit or cost of living increases.

In order to address this difficult situation, the Compensation Commission has recommended linking the salaries of judges to those of Executive Branch managers. Their proposed language would provide judges and family support

TELEPHONE: (860) 757-2100 FAX: (860) 757-2130 E-MAIL ADDRESS: BARBARA.QUINN@JUD.CT.GOV

magistrates with an increase equal to the average salary increase, including both cost of living (COLA) and merit increases, of state managers in that fiscal year. So, for example, if Executive Branch managers received an average of a 2 percent COLA and a 2 percent merit increase on July 1, 2009, the judges would receive a 4 percent increase in their compensation effective on July 15, 2009. Alternatively, if the managers did not receive any increase on July 1, 2009, then the judges would not receive a raise that year, either.

I would like to point out that Connecticut would not be on its own in linking judges' salaries to those of another group of employees or the cost of living – at least eleven other states do so. Some of them link to state employees, some of them link to federal judges and some of them link to the consumer price index. Linking judges' increases to the annual percentage that Executive Branch managers receive would provide the financial security and equitable pay arrangement that others in state government receive.

Providing consistent and predictable increases to judges has become increasingly important, as the average age of appointment of Superior Court judges has decreased to age 47 over the past several years. At age 47, a judge may very well have significant family responsibilities such as children at home or in college. Many judges chose a career on the bench over more lucrative careers in private practice. Other judges come from the public sector ranks of prosecutors and public defenders, where they could count on predictable and consistent pay increases. Once these talented and dedicated men and women become judges, they should not lose the ability to plan for the future.

Linking increases in judges' compensation to the annual percentage that Executive Branch managers receive would provide the financial security, and would ensure that the judges receive the same equitable pay arrangement as others in state government. In addition, it would also allow the state to better plan its own budget. For all of these reasons, I urge you to support of this bill.

On a related matter, I would like to take this opportunity to mention, as I have on other occasions before this Committee, the issue of our temporary assistant clerks (TACs). The Judicial Branch is seeking to increase the pay of the TACs, who have not had a raise in 8 years, as a cost of approximately $2 million per year. The Judicial Branch has requested the funding necessary for this increase, but unfortunately it was not included as part of the Governor's recommended budget. I requested this funding when I testified at the Appropriations Committee's public hearing on the Governor's budget, and also addressed it in our meeting with our Appropriations subcommittee. This is an area of great concern to us.

In conclusion, I would urge the Committee to act favorably on this proposal. Thank you for your consideration.