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*TESTIMONY OF  
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
MARCH 19, 2008*

I appreciate the opportunity to support the amendments in Senate Bill 703, An Act Concerning Court Operations and Related Matters, Protection Orders and Judgments of Paternity regarding the establishment of paternity proceedings.

This proposal requires all findings by a court that a person is not the father of a child to be included in the paternity registry. The paternity registry should have all of the most current information, including non-paternity. The bill also clarifies access to the paternity registry information by the three state agencies involved in paternity and child support establishment and child support enforcement -- the Office of the Attorney General, Support Enforcement Services and the Department of Social Services.

Senate Bill 703 also provides probate courts with the authority to order genetic testing to determine paternity. This authority currently is provided only to superior court judges and family support magistrates. Probate judges often need to determine paternity of a child within their jurisdiction. Genetic testing is the most accurate and probative information regarding paternity. Finally, the bill makes a number of clarifying changes to existing paternity laws to specify when a person may reopen a judgment of paternity and how to file paternity acknowledgements as court judgments.

The Office of the Attorney General works cooperatively with the Judicial Department's Support Enforcement Services Division and the Department of Social Services to establish paternity and child support orders and enforce and collect child support. Last fiscal year, the state collected \$300 million in child support on behalf of the children and the custodial parent. Senate Bill 703 will help expedite the process of determining paternity, allowing for children to receive their lawful financial support from their fathers.

The committee may wish to consider whether the broad authority for ordering genetic testing for paternity should be limited in situations where tests may be unnecessary such as when paternity has been voluntarily acknowledged by both parents or the parents agree not to contest a court determination of paternity. Lastly, the committee should amend section 36(b) to ensure that the choice of law provisions for interstate child support cases are governed by Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-212o and Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-213j, the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act. Federal law requires states comply with the uniform act as a condition of certain IV-D payments.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 703 with these minor amendments.