

Testimony of Mady Kenny
53 Crestview Drive
Newington, Connecticut
Monday March 16, 2009
For the
Government Administration and Elections Committee
Commenting on:

S. B. No. 839 AN ACT CONCERNING MERGERS AND CONSOLIDATIONS OF VARIOUS STATE AGENCIES.

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony on S.B. No 839. My name is Mady Kenny and I am occupational therapist serving children with special health care needs.

While as a mandated reporter I have never had the opportunity to use the services of the Office of the Child Advocate, I have been gratified that the state of Connecticut has such a resource available to protect children and state investments. Besides being staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of experts it is an independent agency allowing it to provide a safe haven for public officials, citizens and state employees to report circumstances that adversely affect the health and safety of children, and to evaluate/investigate state programs and services for children and make recommendations. Since its inception the OCA has tirelessly advocated for, and endeavored to protect, the rights of children with special needs including those with physical and mental disabilities as well as those in the custody of the Departments of Children and Families and Corrections.

S.B. No. 839 would place this agency under the auspices of the Attorney General. Collaboration between these two agencies, OCA and OAG, has been productive. But by placing the OCA and the Child Fatality Review Panel in the OAG the independent oversight and accountability for state funded services to children would be eliminated. It is the loss of this independence that is of grave concern. Both agencies have the same goal, the safe guarding of our most vulnerable population, one that has no power. By keeping them as individual entities you would maximize the strengths of both - including the expertise that one has and the other does not. While as a taxpayer I can appreciate the need to reduce expenditures, this is not a place to do so. You would be tampering with the future, yours, mine and theirs. By not passing this bill you will send the clear message that people care enough to go the extra step to protect our children.