

TO: Members, Joint Committee on Government Administration and Elections  
FROM: Sheila B. Amdur, 132 Lawler Rd., West Hartford, CT 06117  
RE: **Bill No. 839** and **Bill 840**  
DATE: March 16, 2009

I am testifying today as a citizen of the state of Connecticut. I have worked as a mental health professional and for the last ten years as a volunteer advocate for children and adults with serious mental illnesses and their families. I have had the privilege of working with extraordinary and dedicated staff who have made a difference in the lives of countless young and older citizens of this state on whose behalf they have worked. As legislators, you have had the privilege of relying on these same staff of legislative Commissions, which serve as your research arms, your staff support on complex societal problems, and as a counterbalance to the bureaucracy which often veers off its stated purposes.

I am asking that you do not follow the Governor's recommendations of eliminating the Commission on Aging, the Commission on Children, the Office of the Health Care Advocate, and gutting and essentially eliminating the Office of the Child Advocate. These are the commissions and offices I have worked with most closely through the years. They carry no political banner, no partisan agenda, but only stand to serve all of our citizens, especially the most vulnerable, with limited resources, but with more passion and dedication than can be found in any state agency.

One has to question why the Governor would wipe out the work that these commissions and offices perform. It is true that they are sometimes at odds with the Administration (and frankly it really does not matter who the Governor is), but in my memory, no other Administration has asked you to eliminate their work. I understand fully the financial circumstances the State faces. And I stand ready to my part and pay higher taxes to meet these circumstances. But I am not willing, and I hope you are not willing, to eliminate the protections and the advocacy that these offices and commissions have provided us. Please reverse the Governor's recommendations.