



2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 257-8066 • (860) 257-8074 FAX

Sherry Ostrout, MSW, CMC, President
Stephen A. Karp, MSW, Executive Director
naswct@conversent.net
www.naswct.org

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My name is Marcia Bok and I am testifying today for the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers in support of HB 6525 – an act to establish a task force to study the reorganization of DCF. While often a believer that task forces only delay action when action is needed, in this situation I believe that a task force to study the reorganization of DCF is a sound idea.

We would all agree about how complex the work of DCF is. We would hope that any reorganization would be very thoughtful and would greatly improve the work of DCF. There are many issues that such a task force could address. Most important, of course, are outcomes for children and their families. Certainly one task of the study would be to help establish measurable indicators of desired outcomes. It would be very useful for the task force to study issues of prevention and early intervention, community based vs. residential placements, behavioral health, juvenile justice and child protection, the role of families, siblings, and voluntary services, and foster care, adoption, kinship care, and aging out of the system. Intergovernmental and public-private partnerships should also be addressed.

The composition of the task force is very important as the participants could determine outcomes. Thus, as many stakeholders as possible should be represented. Parents and foster parents, who are immediately impacted by DCF decisions and activities, should certainly be represented. The experiences of parents, and their children, provide the most important commentary on the system. Teenagers and young adults who have participated in the DCF system would also have an important perspective to provide.

I would also strongly recommend that the a member of the National Association of Social Workers CT. Chapter also be asked to participate on the task force. With its 3600 members in CT., representing many different facets of social work and intimately knowledgeable about DCF, one of our experienced members would bring a wide range of knowledge about the total service delivery system that DCF impacts in its work. This appointed individual would provide both detailed knowledge, as well as a broad understanding, of the experiences and judgments of social workers who have worked in the DCF system – both in the public and non-profit sectors. NASW/CT. also have many members working in other state agencies, whose work impacts on DCF and who the work of DCF also affects, so that this individual would have knowledge about interagency issues, concerns, and needed solutions.

I think the legislature and the people of Connecticut can benefit greatly from the work of the proposed task force. I can hardly think of anything more important than the work of DCF and its partners in the community. Thank you very much for your help.