



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

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1086

**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Human Services Committee Public Hearing
March 17, 2009**

**Senate Bill 1086, An Act Concerning The Crediting Of
Social Security Dependent Benefits**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in regards to *Senate Bill 1086, An Act Concerning the Crediting of Social Security Dependent Benefits*. We have concerns with this bill.

As members of the Committee may be aware, in IV-D child support cases, the Judicial Branch's Support Enforcement Services (SES) unit is responsible for monitoring child support awards for compliance with financial, medical insurance and child care orders, as well as initiating court-based enforcement actions such as income withholdings and contempt applications when appropriate.

This bill would require SES to credit an obligor's child support account when it learns that Social Security dependency benefits are being paid to the child. We are opposed to this requirement. The situation should be dealt with by modifying the obligor's support obligation downward to reflect the child's receipt of social security dependent's benefits, which can be done under existing law. SES already has the authority to initiate a review of a child support order when it learns that a noncustodial parent has qualified for disability or social security benefits and does initiate actions to modify orders whenever appropriate.

In addition, passage of this proposal would result in a decrease in the federal revenue that Connecticut receives. Last year Connecticut collected \$3.5 million in incentive funds. Federal funding is based on the percentage of child support collected

during the month it is due. This bill would result in an obligor paying less money through the State Disbursement Unit, thus leading to a decrease in our collections performance and an attendant decrease in federal funding.

In addition, subsection (e) of the bill would compel SES to determine whether the court took benefit payments into consideration when the support order was set. This would require a very significant amount of work that cannot be absorbed within existing resources. In order to obtain this information, SES would have to review the hearing transcripts and guideline worksheets for each file. This would be a very labor-intensive manual process and would require additional staff resources.

Finally, SES opposes the language in subsection (g) which would require it to notify a custodial parent that he or she has 15 days to apply to the Social Security Administration for dependent's benefits. It is not appropriate for SES to mandate that an individual apply for federal benefits.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.