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Sen. Doyle, Rep. Walker, Members of the Human Services Committee, For the record my name is Donna Blackman of Salem and I am here to testify in support of S. B. No. 816 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS.

I have been working with the Support System since November of 2006. To say that the system is broken is an understatement. Passage of the CHAP program would alleviate the frustration I have experienced repeatedly, and allow people to be able to plan and change their lives.

It took me 3 months to get an appointment with Social Services to open a case. The office is on one side of Norwich. I called almost daily to find out if my case had been transferred to Social Services, and every day I was told it was in transit. Child Support Enforcement is on the other side of Norwich. It took them two months to transfer my file! At one point, I offered to pick it up and deliver it myself.

Once a custodial parent is in arrears more than $500, it is supposed to be reported to the IRS, and the payor's tax return is supposed to be attached. This portion is also broken. Once the payor is determined to be in arrears, he/she is sent a letter. He has 3 months to dispute it. Once the 90 days expires, a letter is sent to the IRS to arrange the attachment. Meanwhile, if the payor filed his taxes prior to the IRS being notified, he/she receives his tax return! So, even though the IRS is notified, Support Enforcement and the custodial parent have no idea if the payment will be intercepted, or if the payor even filed!

If you are to create a bill for consideration to ensure that tax intercepts go directly to parents and not into the general fund, then it needs to be taken further. Support Enforcement must have visibility and dialogue with the IRS to know when a payor has filed, and the amount of the refund, if there is one. If the payor owes taxes, and the IRS plans to trump Child Support, Support Enforcement will need to know that as well, rather than stringing the custodial parent along with promises that funds are coming, only for the custodial parent, after having done considerable legwork, finds out that the information provided by the agency is erroneous.

To that end, if the payor is due a refund, he/she does not have to file, and there is nothing Support Enforcement can do except to "suggest" the member file. What incentive is there for him to file, if he knows he will not be receiving the money anyway? And, if no court of agency can order him to file to assist in the satisfaction of his arrearage, there is no incentive. If the Child Support Collections Act is to be reformed in this way, language needs to be included allowing courts the ability to order payors to file, and to report that filing to Support Enforcement for tracking.

I know the committee is working on legislation to reform the child support process an in addition to the bill before you I recommend the following other changes. That way it is clear they know you want the bill to go even further.

- The process can't even begin until he is 30 days behind on payments. **The process should begin as soon as the court order is granted.**

- The program has no consistent, reliable tracking system of payors. When the noncustodial parent on my own case changed jobs, I called Support Enforcement, and the

person there even suggested I follow him to his job! **A central database of payors should be created based on custody orders granted by the state courts.**

- Companies have the option of reporting new employees either monthly or quarterly. Meanwhile, the custodial parent has no payments. **Companies should be required to report monthly all new employees to facilitate collections. The database should be visible to all relevant agencies, including Support Enforcement.**
- Once Support Enforcement gets notice of employment, they send a letter, and the company has 30 days to implement. Custodial parent still receives no payment. **Companies should be required to implement and transmit the first payment within 14 days of notice.**
- After implementation, employer has 7 days to transmit to Support Enforcement.
- Support enforcement then has 48 hours to transmit to your banking institution.

Anyone keeping track? Under the current process, the custodial parent could, conceivably, not receive a payment for 157 days! That's nearly 6 months! That means if an obligor plays the system properly, he could change jobs every 6-8 months, and never have to pay support.....

I suggest you spend a day in Child Support Court. It's shameful how much these deadbeat parents owe, and they are allowed to continue not to pay. If the CHAP program were in place, Connecticut would have a sudden and profound interest in tracking these parents down and collecting the monies due.

If a payor is not paying and found to be in contempt of court, Support Enforcement will file a motion on the custodial parent's behalf. However, in the state of Connecticut, a court notice must be served by a sheriff. There are painfully few in Connecticut, and they are woefully overworked. The normal time for service is three to four months! Meanwhile, the custodial parent is waiting for funds.

If the notice is served en abode, the payor can claim he never received notice, and not appear. IF that is the case, the whole service process must begin again. The only time court proceedings can continue is if the payor acknowledges service, or the sheriff acknowledges it was served directly to the non-custodial parent. Once the notice is served, the payor has 14 days to answer. If he does not, Support Enforcement files for a court date, which is 4-6 weeks from the date of filing. And the custodial parent waits. And the arrearage adds up.

So let me add it up for you. Starting from the beginning-

30 days pass without a payment.

Support Enforcement files for contempt.

120 days pass for service.

14 days to answer.

14 days to answer.

28-42 days for a court date.

192-206 days without a payment.

Once you go before a judge, and he orders a payment, which may or may not be what your custody papers state, it will take 30 days to begin the payments.

That's 213-236 days without money for the custodial parent. Yet those children still need shoes, clothes. food, school supplies.....and the custodial parent's job is to provide those things.

And, if the noncustodial parent changes jobs, the whole process begins again.

Once the payments begin, there's still no way to plan, since you don't know when a payment will arrive, or how much you will receive, so you must call every day until they tell you a payment has been received. If you don't call, you'll never know. If a payment doesn't arrive, it has to be 7 days past due before Support Enforcement says they can even call the employer to find out why it hasn't been received. Meanwhile, yes, the custodial parent still has no money.

Please tell me how a parent, making $8 an hour, can provide for a child, or two, on this income and an unreliable system as described above?

Support Enforcement is little help. There is no incentive for them to provide due diligence, as whether or not a single parent gets there money is of little concern for them. They still collect their paycheck. The system needs to be reformed, and the CHAP program proposed is the perfect vehicle. To be able to provide consistent, full payment to single parents is what this state needs. Many single parents are working poor, and this would provide the extra income they need to begin to rebuild their lives and provide security for their children.