



## State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

OFFICE OF PUBLIC DEFENDER  
JUVENILE COURT  
978 HARTFORD TURNPIKE  
WATERFORD, CONNECTICUT 06386

ATTORNEY JAMES W AUWOOD  
(860) 440-8870  
(860) 440-5875 FAX

March 25, 2009

Sen. Andrew McDonald, Co-Chair  
Rep. Michael Lawlor, Co-Chair  
Sen. Mary Anne Handly, Vice Chair  
Rep. Gerald Fox, Vice Chair  
Sen. John Kissel, Ranking Member  
Rep. Arthur O'neil, Ranking Member

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing you in support of House Bill 1157. I have worked with Connecticut Legal Services for the past 11 years. They have been an integral part of helping us resolve our clients cases in a favorable manner. Often times kids are referred to court for school based issues which stem from simple truancy all the way to acts of violence and property destruction. Upon investigating these cases we find that much of the time these children have underlying issues that were not being addressed by the school district at the time of the incident, issues such as learning disabilities and emotional disturbances. We find in a lot of cases that these children are just languishing in the district, and are not excelling. When we see cases like this, we always consult with Connecticut Legal Services for advice as to how to proceed with trying to secure school based services for our client. If we are not successful, we then refer the case to C.L.S. so they can help the parent and child get the services from the school that they are entitled to under both Federal and State law. Without C.L.S.; helping parents and children get the services they need from their school system, less children would be diverted away from the Juvenile Justice System, and more children would fail to thrive and benefit from an appropriate education, which would not only effect them in the short term, but in the long term too.

I firmly believe in and support House Bill 1157 because without Connecticut Legal Services, the indigent people in Connecticut will be at a greater disadvantage than they are already today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Onnerbmo".

Michael Onnerbmo MSW  
Public Defenders Office