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**Testimony before the Select Committee on Children
Recommendations pertaining to House Bill 6419 – An Act Concerning Transparency and
Accountability of the Department of Children and Families
By Jon Clemens, Policy Specialist,
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February 19th, 2009**

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to Senator Musto, Representative Urban, and all of the distinguished members of the Select Committee on Children for their time and attention on the issues before them today. My name is Jon Clemens; I'm a Policy Specialist with the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits.) I come before you today to voice views and recommendations on House Bill 6419 – An Act Concerning Transparency and Accountability of the Department of Families and Children.

This bill calls for the establishment of a taskforce to study the Department of Children and Families; it makes suggestions as to courses of investigation, as well as improvements to the department's care documentation policies.

I urge you to appoint private providers of children's services to any taskforce that may develop from this bill or any similar bill. The experience, expertise, and functional knowledge they would bring with them to the table would be invaluable to such endeavors. We, at CT Nonprofits, would be happy to assist you in identifying and contacting able candidates. We are a trade organization representing more than 530 nonprofit member organizations, more than 75 of whom are providers of children's services. One of the goals of CT Nonprofits is to foster communication and cooperation among nonprofits, as such, our members meet and collaborate regularly. Ideas and viewpoints are not developed in a vacuum, but rather through discourse, a quality they would carry with them.

I would like to highlight and offer support to one portion of this bill in particular. Under Section 1, Subsection (E,) the bill suggests information to be included in every status report and permanency plan study. This would keep track of why the child originally needed DCF involvement, all of the placements they have experienced – including length of stay, all school placements – including length of enrollment, a description of the type of treatment and an analysis of its effectiveness, amongst others. Such information would prove beneficial for the tracking of an individual child's progress; additionally, the data would be readily available for synthesis, allowing for continuum of care reviews, revealing where kids are finding success, where they are being held up in the system, and where service gaps may be present. However, I would be remiss if I did not state that such reporting should not be passed on to the nonprofit providers in the form of unfunded mandates.

If I can be of any help in connecting the Committee to the private provider community, or if you have any questions for me, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

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