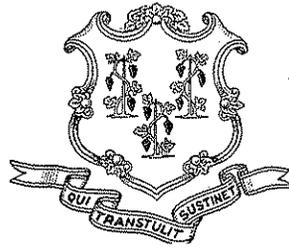


SENATOR GARY D. LEBEAU  
*Third District*

State Capitol, Room 110  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591

Tel. (860) 240-0511  
LeBeau@senatedems.ct.gov  
www.SenatorLeBeau.cga.ct.gov



State of Connecticut

SENATE

6  
DEPUTY PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

*Chair*  
Commerce Committee

*Member*  
Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee  
Legislative Management Committee  
Transportation Committee

February 26, 2009

To: Senator Musto, Representative Urban and members of the Select Committee on Children

**Re: HB 6486 AAC RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND STRONG FAMILIES**

Good morning to the distinguished chairs of the Children's Committee. I would like to thank you for your leadership in raising HB 6486 this session. If she were still with us, I am sure that Representative Faith McMahon would also be pleased. The bill represents the beginning of the harvest of some of the tangible fruit of the labor that Representative McMahon worked so hard to achieve and so fervently wished for.

It was principally through representative McMahon's advocacy working with Senator Meyer, that the fatherhood Task Force was established and initiated. It was and is my honor to work on such a crucial issue at this important time in our history.

The Bill embodies some of the actions supported by testimony in front of our task force, that the state could begin to help turn around some of the negative and potentially disastrous trends that we see in society. Moreover, the bill generally takes these actions by using existing resources. This is important because it pulls together a variety of state functions, or as the cliché goes "breaks down the silos" between the courts, the community technical colleges and a variety of service providers to strengthen the role of fathers in the lives of their children.

The bill also takes a practical and important new approach to child support arrears payments. The data shows that the vast majority of those non-custodial parents who are in arrears are poor, poorly educated and have little hope of making a substantial income. It is ridiculous to drive these men away from their children by forcing them to jump over a hurdle which grows larger by the week for defaulting on payments.

These payments can reach tens of thousands of dollars, making it impossible for most people to ever pay their debts. So the question arises; is it better for children to have two parents, even if one of them cannot meet their financial responsibilities to their child? Or is it better to have one parent and have the second parent essentially banished from the child's life because of their inability to meet their financial responsibility? I come down on the side of two parents for every child.

Finally, the bill opens up the opportunity for possible future funding from Federal sources. This bill is an important second step, building upon the initiative of two great representatives that are no longer with us, Representatives John Martinez and Faith McMahon. We should pass this bill in their memory, to advance this work. Mostly we should pass this bill because it may help our children and our future.

Sincerely,

Gary D. Lebeau  
State Senator, 3<sup>rd</sup> District