



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

CHAMBERS OF
BARBARA M. QUINN, JUDGE
CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR

231 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106

**Testimony of
Judge Barbara M. Quinn, Chief Court Administrator
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 26, 2009**

**Senate Bill 858, An Act Concerning Family Support Magistrates
House Bill 6700, An Act Concerning the Appointment and
Compensation of Family Support Magistrates**

Good morning. My name is Barbara Quinn and I am the Chief Court Administrator. I am here today on behalf of the Judicial Branch to oppose *Senate Bill 858, An Act Concerning Family Support Magistrates* and to support *House Bill 6700, An Act Concerning the Appointment and Compensation of Family Support Magistrates*.

By way of background, there are 9 family support magistrates and 3 family support magistrate referees who were appointed by the Governor for terms of three years. This process has been in effect since 1986, when the General Assembly created the Family Support Magistrate Division to establish and enforce child and spousal support payments and to recover funds paid out in state assistance. There has been a significant change in the program since then. It is no longer a program to benefit the state only. Last year, 82% of the money collected was distributed to Connecticut families.

Although the terms of the family support magistrates are different because they are based upon the individual date of appointment of each magistrate, Senate Bill 858 retroactively changes the terms of all of the magistrates by ending their appointment on June 30, 2009. This is unfair. The

magistrates were appointed based upon a statute that has been in effect for about 23 years. It is certainly within your purview to change the appointment process; however, I believe that any change should be prospective.

The magistrates, in good faith, accepted their appointments with the expectation that their term would end early only if they were removed from their position by the Governor for cause. They played by the rules and made life decisions affecting their families and their profession based upon the current statute. In contrast, Raised Bill 6700, implements a reappointment process for family support magistrates prospectively, which we support. So, as the individual magistrates' terms expire, the new process would go into effect for their next reappointment.

Another difference between the two bills is that House Bill 6700 treats the family support magistrates similar to workers compensation commissioners in terms of their salary and the length of their term. We support these provisions.

I would like to reiterate that it is certainly within your discretion to alter the appointment process for the family support magistrates. However, I strongly believe that any change should be prospective and therefore, recommend that you reject Senate Bill 858.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.