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**TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF
HOUSE BILL NO. 5915
"AN ACT CONCERNING STUCK KIDS"**

February 18, 2009

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a non-profit organization based at the University Of Connecticut School Of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy.

We strongly support Bill No. 5915 which will require the Department of Children and Families (DCF) review and monitor its placement of out-of-state youth and issue annual reports to the General Assembly concerning these children.

Recently, the Center for Children's Advocacy represented **Jason**, a 15 year old boy who had lived in out-of-state treatment for 3 years. He was so desperate to get back to his home community by spring of last year, that he said that he was even willing to go to a residential placement in Connecticut, if only because it brought him closer to his home town of Waterbury and a half-brother who lived in a city foster home. **He said that he just felt like people had forgotten about him.** Today Jason attends school, lives in a therapeutic foster home in Waterbury, and has regular visits with his half-brother.

Unfortunately, today there are still hundreds of children and youth that make up the "unseen population" of children placed out-of-state by the Department of Children and Families.¹ These youth are at great risk of "falling through the cracks" because they are not being adequately monitored at a critical point in life – adolescence and their young adult years. These children are also leaving a community that they may have called home for many years and are being asked to adapt to a new, typically institutional setting, without regular contact from parents, mentors, siblings and friends. Many of these youth can be and should be placed in community-based placements in Connecticut, where they can be treated in a less restrictive environment and allowed to foster nurturing relationships with family, friends and mentors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Healy Eagan
Director of the Child Abuse Project

¹ **There are presently 300 children out of state.** The number of children placed in out of state institutional or residential settings has fluctuated, but it has never been substantially reduced and continues to be a priority concern. DCF Court Monitor, JUAN F. V. RELL EXIT PLAN QUARTERLY REPORT JULY 1–SEPTEMBER 30, 2008 , p. 23, *available at* http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/positive_outcomes/pdf/3rd_quarter_2008_report.pdf

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