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## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING  
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Testimony of Representative Bruce V. Morris  
Assistant Majority Leader

Submitted to the Select Committee on Children  
Connecticut General Assembly  
February 26, 2009

Good morning Senator Musto, Representative Urban and Members of the Committee. I am the co-chair of the Fatherhood Task Force along with Senator Gary LeBeau. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on **Raised Bill 6486, AAC Responsible Fatherhood and Strong Families**. This bill represents a small portion of the hard work of the Fatherhood Task Force. I would like to thank the staff of the Select Committee on Children for all the hard work over the past few months. This bill builds on the work of the late Rep. John Martinez and more recently the late Rep. Faith McMahon who was the co-chair of the Select Committee on Children and a member of the Fatherhood Taskforce. The bill established in 1999 is nationally recognized. Connecticut was the first state to establish a fatherhood council.

Last session Speaker Amann convened the Fatherhood Task Force. Over the past few months the Task Force has gathered input from the public and key experts, including nationally-recognized child psychologist Dr. Kyle Pruett and fatherhood activist Dr. Bill Cosby. The bill before you is an initiative that has come out of the work from the Fatherhood Task Force. It seeks to implement nationally recognized best practices in the country to promote positive fatherhood involvement and address barriers to non-compliance with child support by low income parents. This bill seeks to establish problem-solving courts to alleviate the problems that impede the ability for parents' to engage in their children lives such as employment and poverty. Research has shown children with absent fathers are more likely to drop out of school, become teenage

parents, develop drug or alcohol problems, or become involved in violent criminal behavior.

This bill complements ongoing work done by the judicial branch. This proposal is a work in progress and we expect that there will be a larger body of work that will come out in the future. I am on the Human Services Committee and this bill will have opportunity to be further vetted in that Committee. Judge Monroe, the Chief Administrative Judge for Family Matters is very supportive of this initiative.

This bill will also require the Department of Social Services to report on the work that is being conducted. In the earlier bill that was established through Rep. Juan Martinez's leadership we found that there were no reporting requirements for the progress that had taken place. In this day in age of results- based accountability we need data to support our findings. This bill will require this type of accountability to ensure the outcomes we are seeking for families and children.

This bill also positions us to access new federal funds through the Obama administration for fatherhood purposes. I look forward to working with this committee and respectfully request that you vote out of Committee.