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Raised Bill No. 870  
An Act Concerning the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program

My Name is Judith Moyer and I am Children In Placement's Hartford CASA Program Coordinator and would like to speak to you on behalf of Children In Placement. I have the finest group of CASA volunteers that represent abused and neglected children in both Juvenile and Probate Courts. These CASA volunteers, who receive no payment for their services, complete forty hours of training that meets the National CASA Standards. My volunteers on average spend 10-15 hours a month with some spending even has many as 40 or more hours investigating issues pertaining to their case child. These Guardians Ad Litem attend, Case Status Conferences, Administrative Case Reviews, and PPT's.

In the 3 ½ years I have been Hartford's Coordinator I have attended not one ACR or PPT where the child's attorney was in attendance, but a CIP GAL was in attendance to speak on behalf of the child. My Guardians Ad Litem tell me that when waiting to enter a hearing, attorneys have asked them what is going on in the child's life and have admitted they have not seen their child in over a month. Social workers who were newly assigned ask the GAL for information on the child. Judge's at the end of hearings have complemented my volunteers and thanked them for the thoroughness of their report and for the information that had not been gathered by anyone else. As Coordinators we make every effort to match the expertise of the GAL with the needs of the case, if there are educational issues a retired teacher, if there are medical issues a physician or nurse etc. Volunteers and Coordinators are offered ongoing training in areas that effect abused and neglected children. They attend conferences, trainings and read literature on Autism, Education, Special Education, ADHD etc. They seek to find services for relative caregivers who have guardianship of their relative child through Probate Court.

I am able to easily recruit CASA volunteers but struggle to get enough cases in the courts for them. If a volunteer commits to the extensive training they want to begin on a case immediately. The courts are appointing paid attorney gals rather than volunteers who are more thorough because they have the time to commit to their one or two cases where the attorney gal may have a caseload of 100 or more cases.

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

Sincerely,

*Judith Moyer 2/26/09*

Judith Moyer  
Hartford CASA Program Coordinator