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*TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 19, 2009*

I appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 879, An Act Concerning Oversight and Reorganization of the Department of Children and Families.

This proposal establishes a task force to review policies and procedures of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) with regard to intervention and service to abused or neglected children and to consider whether certain functions should be transferred to other state agencies.

In October, 2008, I urged the committee to consider a partial break-up of DCF, allowing the agency to focus on its critical mission of prevention and intervention of child abuse and neglect. In particular, DCF has the authority for licensing and oversight of state and state-funded facilities and contractors, while DCF depends on these same facilities for delivery of critical services to children under DCF custody and care.

My office, together with the Office of the Child Advocate, has issued several reports over the past 7 years regarding DCF's handling and oversight of critical agency functions. One common theme throughout these reports is DCF's singular lack of oversight over private contractors. Time and again, DCF regulators have disregarded or dismissed failures and shortcomings of private service providers because the agency's protective services division desperately needed the slots or beds for children.

A state agency cannot be an effective regulator and contractor for the same entity at the same time.

I look forward to working with the task force in this critical endeavor to save tax dollars while improving the delivery of services to our children in need.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 879.