

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
February 23, 2010

Testimony of Carolyn Signorelli
Chief Child Protection Attorney

RB No. 31 In Favor



Commission on Child Protection
State of Connecticut

Office of the Chief Child Protection Attorney

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and esteemed Committee Members. my name is Carolyn Signorelli, Chief Child Protection Attorney for the State of Connecticut. I head the Commission on Child Protection, the agency responsible for the system of legal representation for children and parents in cases of abuse, neglect and termination of parental rights brought by the Department of Children and Families in Juvenile Court.

I respectfully urge that the Committee act favorably upon **Raised Bill No. 31, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING THE EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**. This bill seeks to implement the requirements of the Federal Fostering Connections Act P.L. 110-351 and, therefore, must pass in order to ensure compliance with our federal laws and optimal reimbursement to the state.

If the State of Connecticut can successfully reduce the number of foster children who experience unnecessary school transitions and delays in enrollment, it will have taken a significant step towards meeting the educational needs of foster children. If it is determined that it is in a child's best interest to change schools, the transition should be planned at natural times during the school year ensuring continuity of any IEP at the new school and the least amount of difficulty for the child.

When a child is removed from their home by the Department of Children and Families due to neglect or abuse, any pre-existing trauma is compounded by the removal. The child may be experiencing fear, anxiety, loneliness, guilt and confusion. For these children the structure, predictability and familiarity of their

school and the continued contact with teachers, staff and friends are an important source of stability and comfort. In addition, the negative effect school changes, especially mid-term, have on children who may already be experiencing difficulty academically, behaviorally and emotionally on their educational progress and psychological well-being is immense.

Our child welfare and educational systems owe it to these children to not magnify their traumas and add to the obstacles they already face. Providing consistency of educational programming, as well as friendships, teachers and school routine will help neglected and abused children cope with their difficult circumstances and achieve the educational success critical to their future.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,

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