



30 Bank Street
PO Box 350
New Britain
CT 06050-0350
06051 for 30 Bank Street
(860)223-4400
fax (860)223-4488

Testimony of Francis J. Brady, President,
Connecticut Bar Association
House Bill 5148, An Act Concerning Funding for the Judicial Branch
Judiciary Committee
February 26, 2010

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee to comment in **support of House Bill 5148, An Act Concerning Funding for the Judicial Branch**. My name is Francis J. Brady and I am the President of the Connecticut Bar Association, the preeminent voluntary association of attorneys in Connecticut with over 9,000 members who practice in every, diverse area of the law. Many members of the CBA have expressed concern about funding issues affecting the Judicial Branch, and in particular have expressed great concern over the announced courthouse and law library closings and cuts to the Branch's budget that have left it without the ability to provide \$1.5 million to legal aid providers. For these and other reasons, the CBA urges the Judiciary Committee to **favorably report** House Bill 5148.

House Bill 5148 addresses many of these issues which can succinctly be summed up in one term: Providing access to justice. Passing House Bill 5148 will provide adequate funding to:

1. keep all current state courthouses open;
2. save all law libraries from closing and keep all law books and other legal resources up to date;
3. fulfill the legislative intent to provide \$1.5 million to legal aid providers in the current fiscal year.

Closing courthouses and law libraries will lead to greater expense and inconvenience to everyone who needs access to justice. While such closings will greatly impact lawyers and others who

regularly use and need these resources, the greatest impact may be to the self-representative individuals who would need to travel greater distances to use those courthouses and law libraries that remain open and to obtain access to law books, reference materials and law librarians who can offer guidance and assistance in finding the law. It is foreseeable that the loss of these resources will cause the greatest impact on those whose ability to travel greater distances is a hardship or worse, is impossible, as those individuals may be completely shut out from law books and legal resources that they need to prepare themselves for court actions and appearances.

In addition to helping to prevent the closing of courthouses and law libraries, the bill would make fundamental and appropriate changes in the way the Judicial Branch's budget is reviewed and approved, which the CBA believes would assure that the Judicial Branch is treated as a co-equal branch of government instead of as an executive agency. In turn, these changes will help the legislature to better understand the Branch's funding needs and will further help assure that it receives adequate and sufficient funding to meet those needs going forward.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on House Bill 5148, An Act Concerning Funding for the Judicial Branch Technology. On behalf of the CBA, I urge this committee to **act favorably** on the bill.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.