



Montville Youth Service Bureau

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Testimony to the Judiciary Committee
February 26, 2010
In Support of (Raised) House Bill 5148 Judicial Funding

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee: my name is Barbara Lockhart; I am the Director of Montville Youth Service Bureau located in New London County Connecticut. I would first like to thank the committee for allowing me to submit this testimony in favor of House Bill # 5148 which supports the restoration of funding to the Judicial Branch for services that will assist the juvenile justice system in helping youth and families. As a youth services director in New London County for the past 14 years I do feel that I have my finger on the pulse of community needs as well as potential gaps in services. In particular I would like to discuss the need for the establishment of Family Support centers in specific Juvenile Court catchment areas of the state. Currently there are eight Juvenile Court districts without Family Support Centers, which leaves so many of our youth and families to “slip through the cracks”. As a Juvenile Court district without a Family Support Center, according to the Families With Service Needs Advisory Board, each year there are more than 100 young people currently going unserved in our individual court district – each of these children and youth are at great risk of escalating into delinquency without the help they need. Total FWSN referrals to Waterford Court in 2008 totaled 199, and in 2009 totaled 193.

I would like to speak directly to the issue of juvenile status offenders and the Family with Service Needs (FWSN) legislation. In 2007 the direction of how we should handle FWSN cases began to take on a different direction, taking into account the need to address not just the issues of the youth as an individual, but the family as a whole. It is my firm belief that engaging the family from the beginning can set the “tone” for the outcome of a each specific case. Identifying and offering community-based services are essential components to putting families on the road to success. Family Support Centers offer families the tools to realize success by providing intervention services, counseling, mentoring, educational advocacy, referrals for additional services, and so much more. A strong meaningful commitment and collaboration among state and local agencies that serve families is integral.

I strongly encourage the funding of additional Family Support Centers in Juvenile Court catchment areas that do not have one, as we all should do our best to ensure that there is equal access to all programs and services for these Connecticut families. I have known many young people and their families that could have used the resources available in a Family Support Center in the past and I am confident that there will be families in my community that will benefit from having access to a Family Support Center in the future. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Respectfully,

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