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**MARCH 19, 2010 TESTIMONY OF  
THE CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY PROGRAMS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.  
FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
REGARDING**

**HB 5521: AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE AND THE JUVENILE JUSTICE  
SYSTEM AND ERASURE OF JUVENILE RECORDS**

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee: This testimony is submitted by John Gill, Director of Juvenile Justice Services and STEP Project Manager at the Children's Community Programs of Connecticut. CCP is a private, non-profit, multi-service agency which runs the STEP New Haven program, youth mentoring, therapeutic foster care and foster care recruitment, OTR, and Foster and Adoptive Support Team.

CCP supports HB 5522 Sections 7 through 14, the technical and other changes recommended by the Juvenile Jurisdiction Planning and Operations Coordinating Council (JJPOCC) for the effective, continued implementation of "Raise the Age" legislation PA 09-7.

CCP supports HB 5521, which would address Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) in the state's juvenile justice system (sections 1 and 4) by requiring a court order for all juvenile detention center admissions and increasing state agency reporting and planning on DMC.

CCP is also strong support of sections 2 and 3, which would provide for automatic erasure and destruction of juvenile records for children convicted on low-level juvenile offenses (i.e., non SJOs), helping them transition from system involvement to a positive, productive future.

This will help eliminate the unintended negative consequences of a low-level juvenile conviction and help young people transition from system involvement to a positive, productive future. Records that have been destroyed cannot be used against a person later in life when they apply for jobs, look for college financial aid, enlist in the military, and so on.

Imagine when you were 18 years old, and recall the "Raise The Age" research proving that an 18 year olds' brain has not fully developed yet. Try and remember some of the "bone head" decisions you made and the times you used poor judgment. Many of us made stupid mistakes, acting like, well, teenagers. After you made a stupid mistake, remember how you were determined to make it right, resigned to pay the price for the poor judgment. Remember how you got yourself back on the right track, and went on to finish school and eventually graduated from college. Now remember being out in the real world, as a baby-faced college graduate filling out job applications by the dozens, or maybe graduate school applications.

Imagine for a moment that ten years later you were a model citizen, educated, ready to work; your perfect job came open, and you applied for it. But you could not get it, that door was locked to you. Why? Because the one "bone headed" decision and/or one lapse in judgment when you were 18 years old and had a not yet fully developed brain, eliminated you from consideration, because you had "a record." Your records were reviewed and although you paid your debt, righted your course and embarked on a journey to make your mark in the world, you were stopped. Your dreams are dashed!

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information.