

*Members of the Select Committee on Children, fellow Cabinet Members, other Esteemed Officials, and spectators, my name is **Calvin Brown and I am the member of Congressman John Larson's Youth Cabinet from Bristol.** I am here today in support of Raised Bill 5360 "An Act Concerning Children in the Recession" ...*

The presiding theme of the Youth Cabinet's work is a question of "What is the America We Want." After the Hearing on December 5th, what became overwhelmingly and painfully clear is that right now, in hard times like these, the more important focus is The America that So many people desperately NEED. Homeless shelters are filled in the State of Connecticut. Children are losing their homes, losing their ability to receive an adequate education. Parents are losing their jobs and have no way to feed, shelter, or clothe their young. Not only is this a frightening reality, but it is a deeply sad and angering one.

I am glad to testify that I support the legislation that the Commission on Children has put forward because I believe it addresses these terrible problems. This legislation will:

- Help parents find work and job training while allowing their children to stay safe in school
- Make it so that changes in eligibility or qualifications for programs designed to help families will not take effect until the specifics have previously been posted for 60 days.
- Will continue rental assistance programs to allow families affordable housing and will provide incentives for towns that promote affordable housing. Also will help to prevent foreclosures.
- Take preventative measures to protect homeless children from dropping out of school and improve access of higher education eligibility.
- Encourage schools to employ innovative breakfast service methods to help nourish students, and also look into keeping their doors open during the summer to provide meals for students who need them, even during their time off.
- Will require publication of federally funded child nutrition programs throughout the state.
- Will research enacting a fund that would provide low interest rate loans to families facing housing, hunger, utilities, or unemployment crisis.
- Will convey information to communities on Youth Leadership opportunities that will keep youth engaged in their communities.

These are just the pieces of the legislation that I know will directly impact the members of my community in a positive way in Bristol. The previously highlighted aspects of the legislation are direct and historical steps being taken only here in Connecticut. These measures will help to protect youth in this state from being negatively impacted by economic downturns in the future. Therefore, I call for all lawmakers across the state to embrace this legislation.

We The Youth are the driving force of America. We have not been around long enough to create any of the messes plaguing the world today, but we will most certainly be the ones left here to fix them. Therefore, it is my opinion that taking care of the young people in a community should be the number one priority of lawmakers across the country. I call for youth and lawmakers to stand up together and make their voices heard in the midst of this recession- from New Haven to Litchfield, from Connecticut to California.