

# Center for Children's Advocacy

University of Connecticut School of Law  
65 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105

## TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 156, AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF EDUCATIONAL CREDITS

February 23, 2010

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a non-profit organization based at the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy.

Through our TeamChild Juvenile Justice Program, the Center collaborates with the Hartford Juvenile Public Defender's Office and the Hartford Juvenile Probation Office. Our attorneys work to improve the child's juvenile justice outcome by securing needed services through community agencies or the school system. The Center's attorney represents the child on educational issues and access to mental health treatment, which may be at the root of the child's court involvement. Through the Truancy Court Prevention Project (TCPP), eighth graders at Quirk Middle School and Burr Elementary School participate in court sessions held at school where a judge, who presides in an unofficial capacity, reviews students' attendance and academic progress. The TCPP also delivers legal and case management services to ensure students' completion of high school.

Through these projects, we see children who are already struggling educationally and are faced with transitions between school systems or reintegration into the community after placement in DCF facilities. For these already-fragile children, Raised Bill No. 156 will help secure better educational outcomes by:

1. Requiring that school districts communicate with prior districts when students newly enroll; and
2. Requiring that school districts accept credits from the schools of Unified School District #2 (USD #2).

**Raised Bill No. 156 helps ensure that students receive appropriate educational services when they move to new school districts.** All too often, we see students fail to receive appropriate educational services when they transfer between school districts because their records do not follow them in a timely manner.

Current law already requires that a student's prior district provide educational records within ten days of notification of the student's enrollment in a new district. Raised Bill No. 156 amends this provision to require the new district to provide written notification to the old district of the student's enrollment within two days. Practically, this provision is important because, in the absence of notification, the old district often would not know where to send a student's records. Raised Bill No. 156 helps ensure that the prior district can promptly send records to a student's new district which will consequently allow the new district to promptly implement appropriate educational services. Especially for children who receive special education services, these services must be implemented quickly so that these children do not face the challenges of transitioning between school districts without the supports necessary for educational success.



#### Board of Directors

Brett Dignam, JD, Chair  
Peter Arakas, JD, Treasurer  
Nelly Rojas Schwan, LCSW, Secretary  
Mario Borelli, JD  
Kathryn Emmett, JD  
Deborah Freeman, JD  
Constance Belton Green, JD, EdD  
L. Phillip Guzman, PhD  
Rosalie B. Roth  
Felix Springer, JD  
Martha Stone, JD  
Preston Tisdale, JD  
Sandra Trevino, LCSW  
Stanley A. Twardy, Jr, JD

#### Advisory Board

Miriam Berkman, JD, MSW  
John Brittain, JD  
Wesley Horton, JD  
Elizabeth Morgan  
Eileen Silverstein, JD  
Stephen Wizner, JD

#### Executive Director

Martha Stone, JD

**Raised Bill No. 156 also helps maintain students' engagement in school** by requiring that school districts credit students for work completed in USD #2, the school district which provides educational services to children who reside in facilities operated by the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

After returning to the community from placement in a DCF facility, it is critical to promptly engage students in educational opportunities, since many of these students are already at higher risk for educational failure. Students who cannot receive course credit for work already completed are at higher risk of losing motivation and disengaging from school. Since USD #2 is required to abide by the same educational laws as other Connecticut school districts, it is logical to provide students with academic credit for work that USD #2 credits. Indeed, current law already requires that school districts credit students for work completed in Unified School District #1, the school district which provides educational services to children who reside in facilities operated by the Department of Corrections.

Raised Bill No. 156 helps to ensure that school districts have the necessary information to abide by their legal obligations to provide children with equal educational opportunity and to comply with prompt implementation of special education services. For the foregoing reasons, we urge you to pass Raised Bill No. 156. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Hannah Benton  
Attorney, Equal Justice America Fellow  
Truancy Court Prevention Project and TeamChild Juvenile Justice Project  
Center for Children's Advocacy  
University of Connecticut School of Law