



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony of  
Commissioner Susan I. Hamilton, M.S.W., J.D.

Select Committee on Children  
March 4, 2010



H. B. No. 5360 - AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE RECESSION

The Department of Children and Families **expresses concern regarding** H.B. No. 5360 - AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE RECESSION.

The Department appreciates the diligent efforts put forth by the Task Force on Children in the Recession in the gathering of data and feedback from a broad cross-section of Connecticut. We concur with many of the broad policy goals outlined in the report; however, we believe that to enact many of these recommendations statutorily is unnecessary and creates confusing and unfunded mandates on the part of several state agencies.

DCF would also point out that there are other existing advisory boards that have similar responsibilities to the work of this task force, including the Child Poverty and Prevention Council established by Section 4-67x of the General Statutes. Further diffusing these coordinating efforts is counterproductive.

Finally, we point out that the Task Force's First Quarterly Report includes information that "nationally, we are seeing an increase in family violence, especially in areas such as neglect, because families are unable to provide basic needs to children. There is also the possibility for the recession to result in increased fatalities of children."<sup>1</sup> DCF is carefully monitoring a variety of caseload and reporting trends in the child protection, mental health and juvenile justice areas, and we have yet to identify any significant negative trends overall. In fact, we continue to experience significant decreases in juvenile commitments and the number of children in out-of-home care.

This is not to say that economic factors don't have a deleterious effect on families and children. In fact, there is a positive correlation between poverty and abuse and neglect. As members of this Committee know, in response to this phenomenon, the Department continues its investment in the development of a Differential Response System (DRS), which is a child welfare best practice that has been found to be responsive to families, particularly those in economic distress. With respect to the sections of the legislation that relate to child protection matters, the Department believes that implementation of DRS holds greater promise than the multiple strategies vaguely outlined in this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut General Assembly, Task Force on Children in the Recession, *1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report*, January 2010, page 10.