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## TESTIMONY OF CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

### REGARDING SENATE BILL 156 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF EDUCATIONAL CREDITS FEBRUARY 23, 2010

This testimony is submitted by the Children at Risk Unit at Connecticut Legal Services (CLS). For the last 30 years, the Children at Risk Unit at CLS has represented low-income families to access educational and behavioral health services for their children.

Connecticut Legal Services supports Senate Bill 156, An Act Concerning the Transfer of Educational Credits. Senate Bill 156 requires districts to accept the credits that children earn within the Department of Children and Families school district (Unified School District #2) in the same way that they must accept credits from any youth re-entering the district from the Department of Correction school district (Unified School District #1).

Over the years, CLS has witnessed the educational difficulties that many children in DCF placements face. Children and youth who complete credits while in DCF residential care must be allowed to transfer those credits with them when they return to their school district. Otherwise, it creates an additional barrier that the child has to overcome, and additional frustration that increases the chance of school drop out. Under current law, districts are not required to accept credits earned by students attending USD #2 schools, so it is left up to the individual school districts to decide. Having no assurance that credits will be accepted upon returning to the district school creates a disincentive for students to earn credits. Further, it is incredibly discouraging for a student who has worked diligently in school to earn credits toward graduation while placed in a DCF-run facility to be told upon return to their district school that the work would not count toward graduation.

School districts are already required to accept the credits of a youth entering their system from the Department of Correction school district (Unified School District #1). Connecticut law should afford youth in DCF placements the same rights to receive credit for their educational work.

For these reasons, Connecticut Legal Services strongly urges the Select Committee on Children to support Senate Bill 156, An Act Concerning the Transfer of Educational Credits. Please feel free to contact Attorney Jillian Griswold at (203)348-9216 ext. 110 with any questions.