



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

***TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND
INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE***

March 8, 2010

*Robert L. Genuario
Secretary
Office of Policy and Management*

Testimony Opposing Senate Bill No. 269

AN ACT AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAM
REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING AN INITIATIVE TO SHARE
AGENCY DATA TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and distinguished members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony on Senate Bill No. 269, which concerns the sharing of data to promote the well-being of children and families.

Some historical perspective may be in order here. In the 1990' s, there were efforts to create a "common front end" at the human services agencies to be able to collect and share data to help with eligibility issues and coordination of services, as well as assist in program and policy planning. There were a number of obstacles to making this work, principally resources, logistics, training of frontline workers, confidentiality for the clients, the willingness of clients to participate and integrating the data systems of the various agencies. The project ultimately stalled due to these obstacles.

Additional perspective in terms of the current state budget is also required. We ended the last fiscal year with a nearly \$1 billion deficit for which we had to borrow money in order to close the books. At the present time, we are projecting a deficit for the current fiscal year on the order of \$500 million, with a projected shortfall next year in the range of \$700 million. The next biennium has structural problems in the \$3 to \$4 billion range per year. In addition, the state work force is down by almost 4,000 workers due to the recent retirement incentive program. In short, we are struggling just to make ends meet and will likely need to make additional cutbacks in programs across the board.

OPM believes that a project of this sort, properly resourced and administered, would require a multimillion dollar commitment. Integration of the various data systems alone would be a very substantial undertaking. Additional personnel would likely be needed since the data collection and confidentiality sign-offs required would entail substantial new duties for the front line workers, reducing

the number of clients any one worker could provide service for on any given day. Also, additional personnel would likely be required to analyze the data and to provide for the appropriate sharing among agencies and the appropriate use by each agency.

Existing data collection and sharing efforts have yet to advance policy planning to any great extent. Again, the resources and logistics required are a continuing obstacle. For example, section 19a-25e of the general statutes already requires a plan for a health information network. A more prudent approach may be to await the results of that plan before undertaking a yet more ambitious one, particularly at a time when we do not have an abundance of budgetary resources.

While the proponents of the bill may argue that integrated data systems and sharing of data *might* enhance the safety, health and well-being of children, OPM believes that in these times of tight budgets our limited funds should be spent on those services and programs that *have a direct impact* on the well-being of children.

The overriding concern is that this would appear to be a substantial undertaking and there do not appear to be any available resources to do this work. If a narrower proposal could be crafted that identified a specific information problem that could be resolved at low or no cost, we would be happy to consider it.

I would like to again thank the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony.