

TESTIMONY OF MERVA JACKSON FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

AGAINST

S.B. 1223 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A CHILD  
CONVICTED AS DELINQUENT

And

IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL 6634 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE AND DETENTION IN THE  
JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND ERASURE OF JUVENILE RECORDS

AND

H.B BILL 6638 TO ENSURE SMOOTH AND TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF "RAISE THE AGE" TRANSITION  
OF 17 YEAR OLDS TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM THROUGH STATUTORY CHANGES

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Merva Jackson I'm the Executive Director of African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP), one of the Commissioner on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System, member of CT Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan Executive Implementation Team. I'm here to testify against Senate Bill 1223 which would require parents to pay for the cost of treatment and care for their delinquent child.

As an organization AFCAMP serves more than 70 parents annually who are juvenile justice involved or at risk by providing them with education, information and support so that they can better advocate and be involved in their children service plan. We see firsthand daily through our own experience and the experience of many of the parents we serve the many barriers to parent involvement and access to appropriate services. AFCAMP collaborate and partner with many systems (education, child welfare, disability, juvenile justice and health) and community base providers to support parent and develop family driven culturally competent community base services to better meet the needs of their children.

There are so many parents in our community who have struggled for years trying to do the best they can for their children and trying to access services that work. Some have been involved in so many services that haven't worked that they lose faith and give up. We see parent who have lost jobs, housing, experiencing additional family stressors just to name a few. Many of these families are already faced with so much stress; living in poverty, have their own disabilities and don't understand the system. This bill will only add an additional burden and stress to them when what they need is help and support. I appeal to you on behalf of the many families raising children at risk or involved in the JJ system to KILL this bill and let together look at real solutions to better involve parents in the design, development and implementation of their JJ involved children service plan. AFCAMP is prepared to be a part of the solution!

In closing I want to support raised bill 6634 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE AND DETENTION IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND ERASURE OF JUVENILE RECORDS. This bill will help Connecticut to continue moving towards ongoing improvement in the juvenile system by reducing discrimination based on race and ethnicity and stop the cycle to the adult system. For more than 30 years the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP) have mandated states to address this issue. As a

state CT have not taken any really serious steps to address this issue in the past 20 years. The passing of this bill will hopefully begin to move us forward in the right direction; we owe it to our children.

This bill will also insure that children are kept in Connecticut rather than being sent out of state. The money we spend annually sending kids out of state (many case which I'm seen whose needs can be met in CT if we hold system and providers accountable) can be reinvested into creating a continuum of services to better meet their needs. For 13 years prior to starting AFCAMP I worked with some of CT most challenging clients who we provided care for here in CT, It can be done if we have the willingness to do it and hold accountability.

**BILL 6638 "Raise the Age"**; we successfully transition 16 year olds to the juvenile justice system in 2010. Due to better than anticipated capacity, cost and a decrease in the jj system due to JRBs, family support centers and other reform efforts there is much more capacity to absorb the 17 year old than previously anticipates.

I urge you to look closely at these bills and to do the right thing for Connecticut children at risk or involved in the justice system.

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