



Testimony Re: H.B. No. 6340 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-STATE TREATMENT FACILITIES

Representatives Urban and Fawcett; Senator Musto, and distinguished members of the Select Committee on Children, thank you for your time and attention to the issue before you today. My name is Paul Kosowsky and I serve as Vice President of Youth Continuum, a community based non-profit organization that has been providing group home, transitional and independent living services for youth in state care since 1968. Currently Youth Continuum provides four Therapeutic Group Homes and two PASS Group Homes for adolescent boys in six separate facilities, two in New Haven, two in Bridgeport, one in North Haven and one in East Haven. We also provide services to youth aging out of DCF care through our Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP). In addition, Youth Continuum provides services for homeless youth not involved in DCF care throughout the Greater New Haven area.

As one of the senior members of the Intensive Treatment and Transitional Services Sector for CT Nonprofits, I represent a wide range of private providers across the state that provide services for children in state custody, through a variety of programs. I represent the views of my own organization, Youth Continuum, and those of my professional colleagues in stating that while we support many of the provisions of H.B. 6340, there are two critical areas which do not, as currently construed, serve the best interest of children.

1. Some of the most damaged and vulnerable children in our state must be removed from their homes and communities to be treated until such time as they ready to return to community living. When they return from out of state facilities, the transition back to home and/or community is even more complicated. We believe that this transition is best designed using all of the available services in the continuum of care, based on individual needs, not on philosophic principal or political pressures, no matter how well intended.

This bill raises potentially serious impediments to youth receiving the optimal services they require to address serious psychiatric, emotional and/or behavioral disorders.

Youth who have conditions serious enough to send them out of state have previously been determined to have conditions significant enough so as to be unmanageable by in-state providers. Providers do their best to find a way to work with youth who fall within their skill parameters. It is with all due serious consideration that providers determine their own inability to treat. The care of these youth is complex and at a level of pathology that requires expert assessment. We respectfully submit that a superior court Judge is not properly trained to make such assessments and decisions. Rather, it would serve youth needs to have an expert provider panel along with DCF and/or Value Options senior managers to jointly review such cases and determine a best plan for the youth's transition back to Connecticut.

Similarly, deciding whether or not any in-state provider is capable of providing the necessary services before a youth can be sent out of state, should remain a provider decision. Existing referral and evaluation protocols can be amended to require that all in-state providers have the opportunity to review the clinical records and/or interview youth and his/her family, in order to determine if they have the skill set necessary to appropriately serve the youth's needs. Any placement by a Judge into a specific facility which does not feel able to manage a specific youth risks dangerous and/or improper care, at the expense of these most vulnerable children and youth.



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