



Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Select Committee on Children  
February 3, 2011

Testimony of Atty. Shirley Pripstein  
in opposition to S.B. 845

I am an attorney at Greater Hartford Legal Aid, a position I have held for 30 years. For all of those 30 years, my practice has been exclusively in the area of family law and domestic violence. I am an active member and a former chairperson of the Family Law Section of the Bar Association.

I am here today representing Legal Services. On behalf of the Connecticut legal services consortium, I ask you to reject H.B. 845, An Act Requiring the Department of Children and Families to Notify Noncustodial Parents of Certain Abuse and Neglect Allegations.

Currently, DCF is required to notify non-custodial parents when an allegation of abuse or neglect against the custodial parent is substantiated. C.G.S. §17a-103b. The bill before you would amend the statute to require notification within 10 days of receipt of the complaint, whether or not the complaint is substantiated.

Requiring notification of unsubstantiated allegations makes no sense.

As evidenced by the introduction of bills which would criminalize the making of false abuse or neglect allegations, this committee has in the past recognized that the Department receives a number of patently false complaints that are made with the intent of harassing the parent. The investigation of these harassing complaints wastes valuable Department time and costs the taxpayers money. Requiring the Department to notify the non-custodial parent when an *allegation* is received would take more department time, waste more taxpayer dollars, and amplify the harassment.

Our current law, which requires notification of the non-custodial parent upon *substantiation* of an allegation of abuse or neglect is sensible, sufficient, and consistent with the Anglo-American tradition of presumption of innocence.

The bill should be rejected.

---

Shirley M. Pripstein

Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc.

999 Asylum Avenue, 3Fl. Hartford, CT 06105-2465 • Tel: 860. 541. 5000 • Fax: 860. 541.5050 • TTY: 860. 541.5069 •

[www.ghla.org](http://www.ghla.org)

