



**Testimony of Alison Loop, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Kids in Crisis**

**Raised Bill No. 981**

**An Act Concerning the Placement of Young Children in Congregate Care Facilities**

Thank you Senator Musto, Representative Urban, Representative Fawcett, distinguished members of the Select Committee on Children. My name is Alison Loop and I am the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Kids in Crisis, where I direct an on-site health clinic that sees all children who come for emergency care.

My colleagues have talked about the impact eliminating emergency shelter care would have on children in Connecticut. I want to tell you firsthand about Daniel and David, two 4 year old twins who came to Kids in Crisis when DCF removed them from their grandmother's care one evening because of significant neglect and suspected child abuse.

The four year olds were both in diapers....dirty and disheveled. They were terrified of all noises – flushing toilets, doors closing, bath water running. Daniel had difficulty walking; their vocabulary was so limited they didn't speak clearly. They had difficulty feeding themselves. Both had rashes all over their body. Daniel appeared to walk only on his toes, which medical professionals know can be a sign of a neurological condition.

Within 48 hours, I was able to give each boy a thorough physical exam. During the first couple of days they were here, we noticed that, along with all his other problems, David was having frequent staring episodes, where he could not be engaged. In addition to treating their rashes, I was able to make a neurology referral where specialists became concerned about possible petit mal seizures. We scheduled a sleep deprived EEG. But that's not all. Staff and I quickly noticed that David had a distinct body odor and other signs of early puberty...he was scheduled for an endocrinology appointment as well.

When the boys' mother came for a supervised visit, I took the time to meet with her...to learn her medical history ...to try and help me "connect the dots" with some of the boys' issues. That was an important meeting, for nowhere was information that she suffered from a clotting disorder, one that killed her brother a few years earlier.

I wish I could say that these issues are unusual. But sadly, they're within the norm of those we see at Kids in Crisis. Imagine placing these two boys in the middle of the night with a foster family, who simply are available and "believed" to be able to care for twin boys. How long do you think the boys would have been in that home? Do you think they would have made progress developmentally or physically if we didn't have a thorough look at the many problems they faced? I think not.

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By passing this new proposed legislation, you would be doing a disservice to Daniel and David and thousands of Connecticut children just like them. Because these boys who are under 6 years old were given emergency shelter at Kids in Crisis, appropriate care was given and careful consideration was made for their next placement. They could not go home. But armed with the wealth of information we were quickly able to uncover, it was determined that the boys needed long-term therapeutic foster care. An appropriate family was identified.

How are Daniel and David today? They are potty trained, walking normally, emotionally more stable and definitely more communicative. Their foster parents know the full range of what they are dealing with, ultimately giving them the chance to parent more effectively and secure future success for both boys.

Without emergency shelter care for children under the age of six, what would happen to these boys?

Thank you.

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