

**Testimony of Alexandra Quig
M.S.W Student**

**Select Committee on Children
March 1, 2011**

In support of Raised S.B. No. 1044 An Act Requiring the Department of Children and Families to Conduct Abuse or Neglect Investigations of Youths Arrested for Prostitution

Good morning Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Alexandra Quig, and I am an M.S.W student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, with a concentration in Policy Practice and a substantive area of focus on women and children in families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here in support of Raised S.B. 1044 An Act Requiring the Department of Children and Families to Conduct Abuse or Neglect Investigations of Youth Arrested for Prostitution.

I feel that this is an exceptionally important issue. Before I started graduate school I interned at a domestic & sexual violence agency. On a daily bases I worked directly with both young women and men who had been victims of sexual exploitation/prostitution, many of which were recent immigrants to the United States. Many of these children were still young enough to be required to go to school but instead were forced into a lifestyle that was not a choice. By the time I began to work with these young adults my agency was the first service provider that they had come into contact with, but the majority were already involved in the criminal justice system.

There are a variety of reasons why youth become involved with prostitution. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (2002) has developed a report which highlights the major components as to why youths may become involved, such as, running away from home, being forced out of their homes, are abducted, or are escaping physical or sexual abuse. Involvement in prostitution is a serious problem due to the repeated victimization, multiple sexual partners, exposure to diseases, general neglect, and exposure to repeated violence.

Prostitution is a crime under Connecticut law and so is child abuse. The youth who are arrested for prostitution need much needed services but also an investigation in to why they are involved with prostitution and the abuse and neglect they have suffered. The Department of Children and Families is the only one I feel that can do an accurate assessment and help these youth with much needed access to services.

I realize in these tough economic times that Connecticut is facing, additional case loads and services will require DCF to increase spending and potentially more staff will need to be hired. There is evidence with the right kind of services many of these youth can break free from prostitution and the abuse they have suffered. But can there really be a price on the safety and well being of our nation's children, regardless of why they need help?

Thank you for your time and consideration on this bill.

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