



Written Testimony

February 3, 2011 TESTIMONY OF
THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
FOR THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
REGARDING

**SB 846: AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF EDUCATIONAL CREDITS
HB 6225: AN ACT REQUIRING A RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY
REPORT CARD ON OUT-OF-STATE RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN.**

Senator Musto, Representative Urban, and distinguished Members of the Select Committee on Children: This testimony is submitted by Abby Anderson, Executive Director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (Alliance). The Alliance is a statewide, private non-profit organization that works to reduce the number of children and youth entering the juvenile and criminal justice system, and advocates a safe, effective and fair system for those involved.

The Alliance supports Senate Bill 846 which would require Connecticut school districts to accept the academic credits that children earn within the Department of Children and Families school district (Unified School District #2) in the same way that they must accept credits from any youth re-entering the district from another school, including the Department of Correction's Unified School District #1. We know it has also been a problem for kids not getting academic credit for work done while in juvenile detention facilities and we would support statutory changes to close that loophole. We also know that granting academic credit to youth at risk will improve educational outcomes.

The proposed change for USD #2 academic credit is of no-cost and is non-controversial; it is simply correcting an oversight. Without a guarantee of credit acceptance, students can return to their home school from a long-term placement thinking they have earned enough credits to be a junior, and instead be told that their credits won't transfer and they are still freshmen. This unfair situation creates frustration and a likelihood of dropout – which increases the risk of further delinquency.

Raised Bill No. 846 is a good start towards these goals, however, it should be amended to **apply the same timeline for receiving school districts to notify USD #1 and USD #2 of a new student's enrollment as for other districts**, so that this timeline is two days regardless of the school district the student last attended.

The Alliance is also in support of Senate Bill 6225, the intent of which is to reduce the number of youth Connecticut sends to out-of-state residential treatments and to require accountability for youth who are placed in these facilities. According to the Hartford Courant, youth with specialized treatment needs are continuously being referred to out-of-state facilities, which are costing taxpayers a substantial amount of money. Last year, it cost taxpayers about \$35 million to care, treat and educate 367 youth in which 90 were involved in the juvenile justice system.

Sending youth into out-state-facilities may also take a toll on families and local communities. It is more difficult for parents to visit their children and interferes with effective discharge and transitioning the child into their home and community, when they are in facilities hundreds of miles away from their communities. We advocate the strengthening of community-based services, which will a) create more jobs in the state of Connecticut and b) help divert children from expensive in-patient or residential care out-of-state, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars per child per year.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information.