

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
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Testimony of Carolyn Signorelli
Chief Child Protection Attorney

**SB 1179 SUPPORT with suggested
changes**



Commission on Child Protection
State of Connecticut

Office of the Chief Child Protection Attorney
330 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT 06106
860/566-1341

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and esteemed Committee Members, for the record, my name is Carolyn Signorelli, Chief Child Protection Attorney for the State of Connecticut.

I respectfully submit the following testimony in support of SB 1179, ***AN ACT CONCERNING INTERVIEWS OF A CHILD BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE REMOVAL OF INDIVIDUALS FROM THE STATE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REGISTRY.***

As many of you are aware the Commission on Child Protection and my office are responsible for the system of legal representation for children and parents in cases of abuse, neglect and termination of parental rights brought by the Department of Children and Families in Juvenile Court. It is my responsibility to ensure that children and parents receive quality legal representation consistent with the Standards of Practice that the Commission on Child Protection has established pursuant to its enabling legislation.

I support the concept of this legislation and agree that children should only be interviewed by the Department of Children and Families with parental consent in non-abuse cases, and in a non-intimidating and comfortable setting. However, the standard for determining whether an interview can be held without consent of a parent is confusing and too difficult to apply. Courts have already interpreted the standard of "reasonable cause to believe." This language would be sufficient to ensure an objective standard is applied. In addition, the requirement that the Department "actually believe" is not possible to enforce as it entails subjective determinations regarding an individual's state of mind.

I also agree that those individuals who are placed on the Child Abuse and Neglect Registry should have the opportunity to be removed, if the facts and circumstances support such a removal. Certainly this should be carefully undertaken on a case-by-case basis, but appears an important measure to ensure that people placed on the registry for an incident of abuse or neglect do not continue to have their employment opportunities hindered for extensive periods of time after having achieved rehabilitation.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard. If there are any questions, I welcome them at this time.

Respectfully Submitted

Carolyn Signorelli