

Select Committee on Children

PUBLIC HEARING

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RB No. 6336: Support

Good Morning Senator Musto, Representative Urban and esteemed Committee Members. My name is Carolyn Signorelli, Chief Child Protection Attorney for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of Raised Bill 6336, **AN ACT CONCERNING KINSHIP CARE**. I support all three measures this bill seeks in order to improve the manner in which DCF and the courts address the issue of relative placement for children involved with DCF.

The workgroup is important because I believe the issue does need to be studied, understood and then addressed in a manner that assures the best interest of children. While it is desirable to facilitate kinship care where appropriate, it is not in the best interest of children to assume placing them back in their family of origin will ensure their safety and well-being. It is important that we establish an inclusive process for understanding the proposed placement's role in the family dynamic, involvement in or acquiescence to the root causes of the parents' neglect or abuse of their children, and willingness and ability to meet the needs of the children placed with them. The workshop could also consider way in which our system can better support kinship caregivers.

The new provision in Section 2, removing the requirement that a relative placement have a separate bedroom for the child, is just common sense. We can't keep children out of otherwise appropriate and stable relative care and in stranger care based upon an inflexible standard that does not necessarily impact child well-being.

Finally Section 3's addition of a reporting requirement is necessary to ensure compliance with the recent statutory changes promoting the timely identification and investigation of relative resources. Without a reporting requirement, DCF is not held accountable for the timeliness of their investigation or for the result. If DCF "determines" as the former language simply requires,

that the relative is not suitable there is no automatic opportunity for the court or other parties to examine that decision and its basis.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Committee act favorably on this bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Signorelli