

**TESTIMONY OF JEANNE MILSTEIN, CHILD ADVOCATE**  
**BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN**  
FEBRUARY 22, 2011

Good morning, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill No. 981, An Act Concerning the Placement of Young Children in Congregate Care Facilities; Raised Bill No. 633, An Act Concerning Kinship Care; Raised Bill No. 6340, An Act Concerning the Placement of Children In Out-of-State Treatment Facilities; and Senate Bill No. 322, An Act Concerning the Qualifications of Department of Children and Families Employees.

**I support Raised Bill No. 981, An Act Concerning the Placement of Young Children in Congregate Care Facilities.** Connecticut has one of the highest rates in the country of children placed in congregate care placements. It is ranked 48th out of 52 jurisdictions in its use of congregate care settings, and uses these settings at a rate that is almost 60% higher than the national average (National Average: 17%; Connecticut: 27%). Research on these placements throughout the country indicates that congregate care facilities are unnecessarily restrictive for children who do not have behavioral health problems, and are no more successful than foster home placements are at keeping siblings placed together. Congregate care placements for young children, especially prolonged placements, are detrimental to the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children. Young children, particularly those who have experienced trauma, neglect, abuse, and removal from their homes, need a primary caregiver that they can identify as an attachment figure that they can turn to when they need comfort. Shift workers are no substitute for a primary attachment figure. It is therefore of utmost importance that Bill No. 981 be enacted, to ensure that young children are not placed or maintained in congregate care facilities without a compelling need for such care.

6336  
**I support Raised Bill No. 6336, An Act Concerning Kinship Care.** Most of the children in Connecticut's foster care system are placed with strangers. According to the National Data Archive of Child Abuse and Neglect, Connecticut has 13% of its children in state custody placed in relative foster homes; this ranks us in the bottom quarter of states in the use of kinship care. In fact, our rate of kinship care is almost 40% lower than the national average of 21%, and several states place a significantly larger percentage of children with licensed relative foster parents. Arizona, Michigan, Illinois, Washington and New Jersey all have 35%, Florida has 42%, and Hawaii has 44% of their foster children in relative care placements. Raised Bill No. 6336 would require that Connecticut make a focused effort to maximize its use of relative caregivers for children who need to be removed from their homes, in order to provide children with caregivers with whom a loving relationship already exists, and to ameliorate children's experiences of disruption from family, unfamiliarity with caregivers, conflicted loyalties, and struggles with reunification.