



February 22, 2011 TESTIMONY OF
THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
FOR THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
REGARDING
HB 6340: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN OUT-OF-
STATE TREATMENT FACILITIES.

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 is also in support of House Bill 6340, the intent of which is to bring every possible child placed out-of-state by the Department of Children and Families back by July 2013 and to thereafter ensure that children are only placed out of state if a court determines that our of state placement is necessary and in the best interest of the child. This bill also requires DCF to regularly report on the children it has placed out of state, to ensure greater oversight and accountability than statute currently provides.

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 out of state youth. As of late January, there were 367 youth placed out-of-state, 90 of who 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.

Proposed section 2 of this bill creates a committee that will review DCF's budget to appropriately reallocate funds currently used for out-of-state facilities to appropriate in-state and community-based care. Currently mental health and child welfare experts, advocates and family members are included in the language. **We would respectfully request that juvenile justice experts, advocates and families members be included in that committee as well.**

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

2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport CT 06605

203-579-2727

www.ctjja.org