

TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY  
IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 846  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF EDUCATIONAL RECORDS

February 3, 2011

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a non-profit organization based at the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy. Through our TeamChild Juvenile Justice Project, the Center represents children in securing appropriate educational programming and improving academic outcomes by reducing high suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates.

We strongly support Raised Bill No. 846, *An Act Concerning the Transfer of Educational Records*, which will **improve educational outcomes for youth at risk of dropping out** as they return to the community after placement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. While in placement, these youth attend school in the Unified School District #1 ("USD #1") and the Unified School District #2 ("USD #2").<sup>1</sup> Raised Bill No. 846 will improve these youths' educational outcomes by:

1. Ensuring that educational records follow students to receiving school districts by a date certain; and
2. Ensuring that students' credits earned while attending USD #2 are accepted by receiving school districts, just like the credits earned by students attending USD #1 currently are.

Students who return to the community from placement are at high risk for educational failure and dropping out. Many of these students experienced **significant educational failure prior to their placements** and, on average, are considerably below grade level in reading with high rates of special needs.<sup>2</sup> Stressors during their transitions to the community aggravate their past educational failure.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, **these students are much more likely to drop out**, and national studies estimate that more than 66% of these students do not complete high school.<sup>4</sup>

**Failure to transfer records and credits in a timely manner exacerbates that risk.** Without records from a student's past educational placement, schools often do not provide appropriate educational programming, particularly for students with individualized

<sup>1</sup> USD #1 provides educational services to youth in the custody of the Department of Corrections, while USD #2 provides educational services to youth in the custody of the Department of Children and Families. The Unified School Districts are subject to the same oversight by the State Department of Education as any other Connecticut school district. CONN. GEN. STAT. §10-15d.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Feierman, Jessica, et al., *The School-To-Prison Pipeline... and Back: Obstacles and Remedies for the Re-Enrollment of Adjudicated Youth*, 54 New York Law School Law Review 1115, 1123.

<sup>3</sup> Brock, Leslie and Natalie Keegan, *Students Highly At Risk of Dropping Out: Returning to School After Incarceration*, available at: <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/resources/spotlight/spotlight200701b.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> See Feierman, *supra* note 2 at 1117.



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education programs. Additionally, failure to accept credits earned by students in placement encourages students to believe that their efforts in school have been futile.

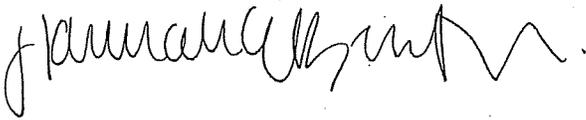
**Raised Bill No. 846 is a no-cost way to reduce the risk of educational failure for these students.**

Connecticut law already requires receiving school districts to request these students' educational records; Raised Bill No. 846 only creates a clear timeline for that request. Connecticut law already requires receiving school districts to accept credits earned by students while attending USD #1; school districts should not incur additional cost for accepting credits for coursework already completed by students while attending USD #2.

Although Raised Bill No. 846 is a good start towards these goals, 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.

By ensuring that students' educational programming reflects the progress that they have made while in placement and that it is based on the records from prior placements, Raised Bill No. 846 will help achieve better life outcomes for Connecticut's youth. For the foregoing reasons, we urge the committee to pass Raised Bill No. 846. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hannah Benton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "H" and a long, sweeping tail.

Hannah Benton  
Staff Attorney  
TeamChild Juvenile Justice Project