

**Testimony Supporting
H.B. 5219: An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Young Adults in the
Annual Report Card on Policies and Programs Affecting Children**

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Select Committee on Children
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Senator Gerrata, Representative Urban, and Distinguished Members of the Select Committee on Children:

We are testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

Connecticut Voices for Children **supports** H.B. 5219: An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Young Adults in the Annual Report Card on Policies and Programs Affecting Children.

Over the past several months, Connecticut Voices for Children has had the opportunity to serve on the working group advising this Committee on the development of the Annual Report Card on Policies and Programs Affecting Children. From the beginning of the process, it was clear that, in order to effectively speak to the future success of children, it was also necessary to take into account policies and programs affecting young adults. In addition, there is a wealth of recent academic literature demonstrating that young adulthood is a distinct developmental period that warrants special attention.¹

We hope that, among other things, the revised report card will track outcomes for one particularly at-risk subpopulation, youth who have "aged out" of the foster care system—those young people formerly in DCF care who have reached the age of majority without having found a permanent family. Without a family to support their transition to adulthood, these young adults are at high risk for poor outcomes in health, education, employment, and social/emotional development. Studies show that, among other things, youth aging out of care are far less likely to graduate from high school or be enrolled in college, far more likely to experience homelessness or involvement with the criminal justice system, and are less likely to be earning a living wage than their peers in the general population.² While Connecticut has markedly increased services to this group of youth over the past decade, we believe there are many opportunities to improve outcomes for this population.³ Inclusion of young adults in the Annual Report Card would help increase public awareness of the challenges faced by these youth and other high-needs groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill and for the opportunity to serve on the working group advising you on the development of this important initiative.

¹ See, e.g., Arnett, Jeffrey J. "Emerging Adulthood A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties." *American Psychologist*, 55(5), May 2000, 469-480. Available at: http://www.jeffreyarnett.com/articles/ARNETT_Emerging_Adulthood_theory.pdf. See also Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. *The Adolescent Brain: New Research and Its Implications for Young People Transitioning From Foster Care*. September 2012. Available at:

http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/The%20Adolescent%20Brain_prepress_proof%5B1%5D.pdf.

² See Mark Courtney, Amy Dworsky, JoAnn S. Lee, and Melissa Raap, *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Ages 23 and 24*, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, p. 4. Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest_Study_Age_23_24.pdf.

³ For a brief review of services currently provided to this population and opportunities for reform, see our factsheet: "Promoting Successful Transitions for Adolescents 'Aging Out' of Foster Care." Connecticut Voices for Children, September 2011. Available at: <http://ctkidslink.org/publications/cw11fosteryouth.pdf>.