



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

**Testimony of the Honorable Christine E. Keller
Chief Administrative Judge for Juvenile Matters
Select Committee on Children Public Hearing
February 28, 2012**

**S.B. 192, An Act Concerning Finalizing Adoptions by
the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters**

On behalf of the Judicial Branch, I am here to testify in support of **Senate Bill 192, *An Act Concerning Finalizing Adoptions by the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters***.

This bill would allow the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters to handle adoptions that follow a judgment of termination of parental rights entered by that court.

It makes sense that the Superior Court, which has followed the history of the child and the family, adjudicated the child neglected, abused or uncared for, terminated the parents' rights and appointed the department as statutory parent to pursue an adoption, should continue with the case until final permanency is achieved for the child. Keeping these cases in the juvenile court where they begin, rather than requiring the adoption petition be filed in the Probate Court, as current law requires, saves time by avoiding the duplication of information the Superior Court already has acquired for another court. It will also save money by eliminating the need for the appointment of a new attorney or guardian ad litem for the child and ensure the child continuity in representation by a lawyer who already has been representing the child for several years.

Passage of this bill also will improve our efforts to comply with the permanency guidelines mandated by the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. The last review of Connecticut practice conducted by federal authorities specifically highlighted unnecessary delays in achieving adoptions due to the unnecessary shift in jurisdiction and recommended the passage of this proposal. Oftentimes, children wait over a year before their adoptions are finalized. If the Superior Court is retaining jurisdiction, it already has an open case and can more quickly issue orders that expedite the matter to a full conclusion. The confidentiality of the names of the biological parents, unless such information had been previously disclosed, could easily be preserved by the creation of a separate file for the adoption petition.

In 2011, the juvenile courts heard and decided 469 termination of parental rights petitions. As a judge who has presided over termination of parental rights petitions for nearly 12 years, and speaking on behalf of all the judges presiding in our juvenile courts, it would be nice to be able to see a case in which we have invested considerable time to a full and rewarding conclusion.

We hope you will support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.