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HB 5186

*Alexander*  
Good Morning Representative Urban, Senator Gerratana, and honorable members of the Select Committee on Children

I am a social worker and public policy advocate for the CT Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents. Our nonprofit agency supports, trains and advocates for foster, adoptive and relative caregiver parents in the State. There are over 3000 foster families in the state.

I am here in support of, An Act Adopting a Foster Parent Bill of Rights. *HB 5186*

This Bill of Rights asserts again the need for foster parents to be treated with respect and as trusted team members. While most of the items mentioned in this bill are already part of the Department of Children and Families policies and procedures, this bill brings the information into a single document. The requirement that the Bill of Rights be given to foster parents with each placement will further remind each DCF worker and each foster parent of the importance of these rights. Foster parents should not be frustrated in their attempts to obtain information about the children in their care, and they should be treated as full members of the treatment team. They must have the ability to ask questions without retaliation, and to get responses in a timely manner. They should be appreciated when they strongly advocate for the children in their care rather than feeling punished or disregarded. We hope that passage of this bill will bring greater self-esteem and satisfaction to our foster parents. Foster parents are always needed, and satisfied foster parents are the greatest recruitment source for new families. For those parents who have a grievance, we have changed the grievance process to be the administrative hearing instead of the court process that was in the bill last year.

According to the National Association of Foster Parents, at least sixteen other states have passed a foster parent bill of rights. This can ensure that foster parents are treated well and have the support services they need to nurture the children who are placed with them.

We applaud the work of Commissioner Katz and the changes happening in the Department. With over 3000 employees, however, it takes considerable time for the changes to filter down to the service level.

We urge passage of this bill to bring the respect and consideration that our foster families deserve.

Sincerely,

*Carolyn Goodridge*  
Carolyn Goodridge, Public Policy Advocate, Outreach Social Worker

CT Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents

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2008 Recipient of The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's *Angel in Adoption Award*