

Testimony of Matt Cole
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In Support of H.B. 5185, An Act Concerning Interviews in Child Abuse and Neglect
Cases

Senator Gerratana, Rep. Urban, members of the Select Committee on Children, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 5185, , An Act Concerning Interviews in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases.

This policy is one that is of crucial importance to the future of our state. It needs to be enacted, and it needs to have been enacted yesterday. In order for HB 5185 to fully achieve its goal, however, there are some wording changes that should be made to the proposal to eliminate vagueness or chances of policy abuse. The text HB 5185 adds to the existing statute is indeed necessary. The wording change that I would like to propose is that you leave in the bracketed text. This would eliminate confusion as to the statement of purpose and the statute itself. I would also propose that the term "disinterested adult" on line 23 be changed to "neutral, qualified adult, preferably a social worker," as "disinterested adult" is vague as to who qualifies for that role.

I know this may sound like I am being nitpicky, but this is a good and necessary step forward for our state's policies. Friends of mine in the field are quite supportive of this proposal, and they wished for me to extend their support, in addition to my own, to this committee in general, but this bill in particular. There have been far too many instances where social workers have been unable to take necessary action for the safety of a child, and we need to ensure that everyone is safe. With the changes I have proposed, I believe it is possible to achieve a good balance between ensuring the safety of children and respecting the due process we are all guaranteed.

We need to give caseworkers all the tools possible to best serve their populations. House Bill 5185 is one of those tools. Thank you for your time, and I wish you the best of luck.