

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
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On Proposal to Merge Commission on Children

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Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak for children in Connecticut.

Our state has provided a voice to many constituencies through its commissions in our legislature. Every commission proposed to be merged into one Commission on Citizen Advocacy by the governor's budget represents individuals that are able to vote in any election in our state - with one critical exception.

According to the US Census 2012 estimates, Connecticut is home to more than 3.5 million people. Children represent 22.4% of that number. That is 784,000 individuals in Connecticut that do not have a voice on matters before this body that impact them.

Since 1985, The Connecticut Commission on Children has been able to be a voice at the table for every child in our state on every piece of proposed legislation. The Commission on Children provides nonpartisan analysis and recommendations on all issues affecting our children, and promotes policies that are in the best interests of children – your 784,000 constituents that cannot vote.

You know, as do I, those policies are not always easily formulated. Many will be, and frankly are, at odds with what is fiscally expedient. Many of you have shown your willingness to resist pressures and put the best interests of children ahead of other clamoring voices and competing priorities. I applaud you for that. As a parent, I thank you sincerely. Children deserve our best efforts. The events of the past few months have exposed in glaring realism how much we cherish our kids and their needs, rights and protection. The Connecticut Commission on Children is the entity through which the legislature verifies this concept, and provides the essential specialized voice for children in these halls and rooms.

I respectfully submit my request that you reject the proposed changes to the Connecticut Commission on Children on the basis that their unique and independent mission and services are critical to the well-being of children of this state. Keep the Commission on Children intact.