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STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY
OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE
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Testimony of Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee
Friday, March 22, 2013

Good day Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. For the record, my name is Garvin Ambrose and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

House Bill No. 6353, An Act Concerning State Budget Reform

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) was established as an independent state agency to ensure the protection and promotion of the constitutional and statutory rights of crime victims throughout the criminal justice process. The independence of the agency is crucial to its advocacy on behalf of crime victims, whether it be within the criminal justice community or through legislative advocacy.

From its inception, the OVA's budget has remained constant, yet the OVA has attempted to effectively carry out its mandates while maintaining responsible spending within the agency. Personal financial sacrifices have been born by all staff in order to properly support the mission of the office. Additionally, the OVA has adjusted to several budget reductions without compromising the mission of the agency. More staff is certainly needed in order to properly service the growing number of crime victims within the state; however, the immediate need of the OVA is to seek the financial resources to transition its part-time office assistant into a full-time administrative assistant. As I am sure that you know, it is impossible to properly operate an office when the essential employee is restricted to 30-hours instead of the 40+ that is needed of her.

As you know, during the 2011 legislative session, the OVA was merged into the Office of Governmental Accountability (OGA). This merger was intended to consolidate the "back office support" of several agencies in an effort to improve efficiency and save money. Initially, and before my tenure, there were concerns expressed over the OVA's continued operational independence; however, the concerns were quickly resolved as the OGA's duties to the agencies included personnel, payroll, affirmative action, administrative and business functions and information technology. To this extent, the merger has proven quite beneficial to the OVA, and we are appreciative of that support.

Section 3 of House Bill N. 6353 seemingly modifies the language concerning the budgetary appropriation to each of the agency divisions of OGA. Although, as proposed, the OVA continues to maintain its independence of agency expenditures, the OVA's total agency appropriation appears to be

merged within the central administration appropriation of OGA. As the merger has not yet occurred, the OVA is without evidence to ascertain whether this proposed merger will have a negative effect on its functionality and independence; however the OVA can state with certainty that the current system of independent management of its own budget has worked thus far, and at a minimum should remain as such.

I thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



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