

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
RAISED BILL NO. 1158, AN ACT CONCERNING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING
AND
RAISED BILL NO. 6696, AN ACT CONCERNING ENHANCED STATE EFFORTS
TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

April 11, 2013

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a private, non-profit legal organization based at the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy. I am an attorney at the Center and the Director of the Teen Legal Advocacy Project, which provides legal services to teens throughout the state. In addition, I am the Chair of the Connecticut Runaway and Homeless Youth Workgroup,¹ a statewide group of professionals advocating for improved access to services and supports for runaway and homeless youth in Connecticut. The Workgroup is comprised of state agencies including the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Court Support Services Division, and the State Department of Education, as well as private providers throughout the state including Center for Children's Advocacy, Partnership for Strong Communities, The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, RYASAP, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, True Colors, Kids in Crisis as well as others.

I write to support two bills: Raised Bill No. 1158, "An Act Concerning Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking" and Raised Bill No. 6696, "An Act Concerning Enhanced State Efforts to Prevent Human Trafficking." The Center supports these bills because we believe they will improve Connecticut's ability to provide support and services to children and youth who are victims of human trafficking. We hear the stories from youth who are homeless and at risk of being lured into sexual exploitation and trafficking. These bills will help to stem the tide by providing stronger penalties for traffickers and those who patronize prostitution, providing notice of resources to victims, and analyzing the State's resources for victims.



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With regard to the work of the task force proposed in Raised Bill No. 6696, section 4, we urge the task force to pay particular attention to:

- examining the incidents of *children and youth* who are lured into prostitution,
- the relationship between *homelessness* and sexual exploitation, and
- the particular vulnerabilities of youth under the care of the Department of Children and Families.

¹ The Connecticut Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth was convened in the summer of 2008 in response to a request by the American Bar Association's Committee on Homelessness and Poverty as well as the National Network for Youth that each state bring together advocates to affect systemic change on behalf of runaway and homeless youth.

What we know is that within 48 hours of leaving home, 1 in 3 teens will be lured into prostitution.² This is a very real threat. We know that homeless youth are targets to be lured into the life of prostitution (also called domestic minor sex trafficking). The United States Department of State "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010" found that the majority of domestic victims of sex trafficking are runaway and homeless youth.

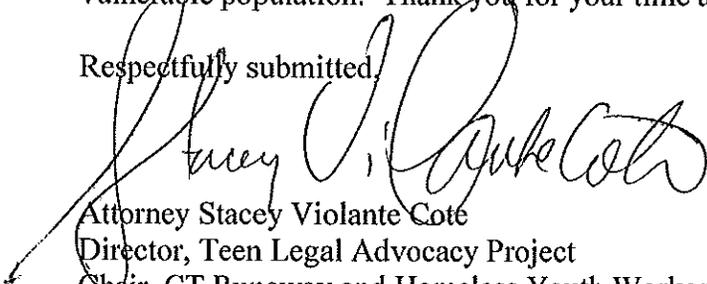
The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth states that parental abuse and neglect is a primary cause of homelessness among unaccompanied youth (homeless youth who are on their own).³ The National Network for Youth estimates that according to studies of a homeless youth sample, 33% had been in foster care, 51% had been physically abused, and 60% of girls and 23% of boys had been sexually abused.⁴

In Connecticut, we know there were over 2800 homeless students in our schools during the 2011-12 school year.⁵ We also know that many homeless children and youth depend on outreach services to get food and hygiene products- 1774 youth were provided with health and hygiene products while 5414 youth were provided with food or drinks through street outreach programs in Connecticut.⁶ These vulnerable youth are at risk to being lured into sex trafficking.

Additionally, Children and youth in the child welfare system are at a high risk to being recruited into sex trafficking. Currently, DCF has identified over 130 cases of youth involved in domestic minor sex trafficking. Many of these involve youth already known to DCF.

We urge your support for these bills which will enhance Connecticut's response to this vulnerable population. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney Stacey Violante Cote
Director, Teen Legal Advocacy Project
Chair, CT Runaway and Homeless Youth Workgroup

² The Salvation Army- STOP IT Initiative Against Human Trafficking citing the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, http://www.usc.salvationarmy.org/usc/www_usc_stopit.nsf/vw-text-index/954dc06d95b9cad8862573d200680763?opendocument.

³ "Using What We Know: Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth." 39, Julianelle, Patricia, The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, February 2008, available at http://www.naehcy.org/dl/uwwk_youth.pdf.

⁴ "Unaccompanied Youth: Fast Facts" National Network for Youth, citing YouthCare, Inc., 1998, available at http://www.nn4youth.org/media/factsheets/FactSheet_Unacompanied_Youth.pdf.

⁵ CT State Department of Education, Consolidated School Performance Report, Parts I and II, School Year 2011-12.

⁶ National Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System, Standard Reports, Street Outreach in CT, Sept. 1, 2011-Aug. 31, 2012, available at https://extranet.acf.hhs.gov/rhymis/dev/StdSOPGetParams.jsp?states=CT&title=Street+Outreach+Program&uri=Std_SOP&sites=states&Submit=submit.