



University of Connecticut
School of Social Work

Testimony Supporting Raised H.B. 6499: AAC The Results-Based Accountability Program and Children's Rights and H.R. No. 11: Resolution Memorializing Congress to Ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC)

Kathryn Libal, PhD, University of Connecticut School of Social Work
Committee on Children
March 5, 2013

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

Over the past twenty years I have developed an understanding of the importance of recognizing the human rights of children, initially in countries such as Turkey and China where I conducted anthropological research related to the right to access quality education on a basis of non-discrimination. In the past ten years I have engaged a growing community of child welfare policy practitioners and social workers who recognize the considerable strengths of engaging in human rights-based approaches to child welfare in the United States. I participated in early efforts of the U.S. Campaign to Ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and am active in the U.S. Human Rights Network, as well as serve as Associate Director of the Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to testify on the importance of passing House Resolution No. 11 and Raised Bill No. 6499.

Passing House Resolution No. 11 (Resolution Memorializing the United States Congress to Ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) would signal Connecticut's clear commitment to realizing the rights of children, not only in Connecticut but also throughout the United States and other countries. We would thus join the growing number of states, municipalities, and organizations that have supported such resolutions in the past decade.

I also support **Raised Bill No. 6499 An Act Concerning the Results-Based Accountability Assessment Program and Children's Rights**. Establishing a task force on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a necessary first step for the state. It will permit the state to examine

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how CRC rights-based standards for child protection and provision of basic needs could be integrated into ongoing assessment of the realization of children’s rights. Such measurement of effort and outcome is being integrated in other states (such as New York) at the pilot project stage. This is an opportune time for the state to take leadership in assessing and better understanding how its resources can be aligned to assure children’s well-being.

Connecticut has already shown leadership within the United States in terms of recognizing the importance of the Office of the Child Advocate, which is an international standard for independent processes to monitor and review of programs intended to promote children’s well-being. Such an office is implemented in many European countries and in provinces throughout Canada. Other efforts in the state to address social and economic inequality in access to quality education, decent and affordable housing, childcare, and child protection already address basic protections to be afforded all children. Passing House Resolution No. 11 and Raised Bill No. 6499 would help raise the visibility of such efforts and afford the state the opportunity to systematically examine how these programs contribute to the goals of promoting child welfare.

Examining and understanding the international standards set forth in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee general comments and recommendations on the meaning of the specific provisions in the treaty, and the policies, programs, and practices developed by other UN and regional bodies who have innovated in child welfare provision and protection is a worthy endeavor for a state task force on the UN CRC.¹ Thorough analysis of state policies that affect children (e.g., Department of Children and Families, Department of Social Services, Department of Education, Department of Developmental Services, and Department of Corrections) from a “Child Impact” perspective² will yield insight into how to better calibrate programs to more effectively address the basic human needs of children (e.g., nutrition, early education, health, primary education, after-school supports, alternate care arrangements for children who do not live with biological parents, etc.). And, importantly, task force attention to the UN CRC standards will provide an opportunity to highlight one of the treaty’s most important innovations in human rights – to recognize the right of the child to participate to the extent possible in decisions affecting their immediate and future lives and well-being.

¹ Libal, Kathryn & Neubeck, Kenneth (2013). The Rights of the Child to an Adequate Standard of Living: Applying International Standards to the U.S. Case. In L. Minkler (Ed.), *The State of Economic and Social Rights* (pp. 175-203). New York: Cambridge University Press.

² The Children’s Ombudsman (Sweden). Prepared for Audits: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a Tool for Auditors in Local Authorities, County Councils, and Regions. Retrieved from: http://www.crin.org/docs/Prepared%20for%20Audits_2007.pdf

The National Association of Social Workers has called for greater U.S. participation in the Convention on the Rights of the Child for more than a decade.³ And the social work profession increasingly recognizes that child welfare policies must be examined more holistically and systematically to address the particular forms of inequalities that have become endemic to U.S. society broadly, and to the experience of children in Connecticut in particular. I regard both the resolution and raised bill as positive steps toward realizing these aims and wholeheartedly support their passage by Connecticut's legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn Libal', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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³ Libal, Kathryn, Mapp, Susan, Ihrig, Eileen & Ron, Aviva (2011). Commentary: The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Children Can Wait No Longer for Their Rights. *Social Work*, 56, 4, 367-370.

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