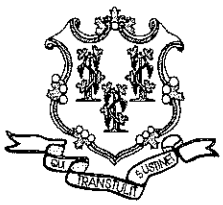
STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Public Hearing Testimony

Children Committee
February 26, 2013

S.B. No. 654 AN ACT CREATING A MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding S.B. No. 654, An Act Creating a Mental Health First Aid Program for Parents. This bill would establish a mental health first aid program for parents so that parents will be better equipped to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness in their children and the community in general.

While we can appreciate the goals of this legislation and believe that we can provide some online and limited training resources, we believe that there may be a cost associated with all aspects of this legislation that is not currently in the DCF budget.

H.B. No. 6465 AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL THERAPY

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding H.B. No. 6465, An Act Concerning Animal Therapy.

DCF supports the concept of expanding the use of animal assisted therapy in many areas of our work. We witnessed first-hand how effective the bond between children and animals can be during the recent Newtown tragedy. Dogs were brought in from across the country, providing a needed sense of comfort to many of those directly impacted by the events of December 14th. We also believe that animals may be of significant comfort to children when they are interviewed or have to testify in Court in sexual abuse cases.

In the current fiscal climate there may not be funds available to accomplish what this bill seeks however, we are willing to work with the proponents of this legislation to seek private funds to accomplish many of the worthy goals of this bill.