

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 6482, AN ACT CONCERNING BIRTH
CERTIFICATES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

March 15, 2013

My name is Ashleigh Eubanks, I am a Homeless Youth Coordinator working at Burns Latino Studies Academy. I work with youth at Burns School and from all over Hartford. My position was created in order to address the lack of awareness around youth homelessness in the Hartford area, as well as the limited resources available to these youth. In my position I perform outreach to homeless and youth who are on their own, working with them to get their basic needs met while also providing them with opportunities to self-advocate for much needed services and supports. I also organize workshops and presentations to raise awareness to the broader community around the needs of unaccompanied and homeless youth. Prior to my position as Homeless Youth Coordinator at Burns, I had the opportunity to participate in a Doctoral research Project lead by educator Monica Brase, through which we interviewed Hartford youth who had been unaccompanied at some point in their high school career. Dr. Brase's research was the first of it's kind to take a closer look at unaccompanied youth homelessness in Hartford. I was selected to participate in this research because, as a former Hartford youth, my home became a "safe haven" for friends and peers who were fleeing unsafe and unstable living environments. In my highschool years alone, my family took in somewhere around 15 unaccompanied youth for various periods of time.

This bill would eliminate one of the major challenges faced by unaccompanied and homeless youth. In cases where youth have fled the home due to abuse or neglect, needing parental permission to access their birth certificates may require them to interact with their abuser, thereby jeopardizing their physical and mental health. In other cases where a youth's parent or guardian is homeless themselves or unable to be reached, the process of obtaining parental permission could be indefinite. It is crucial in our efforts to solve youth homelessness that these youth are able to act independently in obtaining their birth certificates. **Please support Raised Bill No. 6482. It is an immediate solution to one of the many challenges faced by homeless and unaccompanied youth.**

Day to day survival is an immense struggle for unaccompanied and homeless youth. The main causes of youth homelessness are: abuse and neglect by a parent or guardian; a parent's intolerance of a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender youth's sexual identity; a parent's intolerance of teen pregnancy or parenting as well as the breaking up of a family unit due to poverty and financial instability. The inability to access one's birth certificate prolongs and in some cases even prohibits youth from enrolling in school, gaining employment, receiving state assistance and accessing health care. These are the same resources and support systems that can contribute to ending a youth's homelessness.

This testimony is to strongly urge you to support Raised Bill No. 6482, "An Act Concerning Birth Certificates for Homeless Youth", which amends the current statutes to allow homeless youth who are under eighteen years old to access their birth certificates .

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,
Ashleigh Eubanks
Homeless Youth Coordinator
Burns Latino Studies Academy
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