



## THE SHARED PARENTING COUNCIL OF CONNECTICUT

### Position Statement on S.B. 494 and H.B. 5524

Submitted by John M. Clapp, Chair, March 31, 2014

It is the position of Shared Parenting Council of Connecticut (SPC, a 501c4 incorporated in 2003) that Connecticut's family courts need major changes. The SPC favors these two bills because they begin the process of much needed reform.

You have the opportunity to reduce conflict and reduce the time and money involved in divorce. Here are some simple amendments to S.B. 494:

- Require judges, family relations officers and others to ask the litigants repeatedly: which parent is more likely to provide "frequent, meaningful, and continuing contact" between the child and the other parent?
  - The courts need to clearly send the message that each parent must promote frequent and meaningful contact with the other parent.
  - Of course there are exceptions in cases with proven violence, neglect or abuse.
- Guardian Ad Litem (GALs) need to be carefully supervised as specified in 494.
- Modify S.B 494 to require GALs to promoting active involvement by both parents.
- Alimony requires guidelines for judges to follow. This will ensure consistency across courts in Connecticut.
  - Modify S.B 5524 to require guidelines.

Most of the reforms outlined here could be implemented by the courts without legislation. **Please set up a dialogue between court officials and the SPC.**

Thank you.