



TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
MARCH 10, 2014

FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SUPPORTING RAISED S.B. NO. 366

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ERASURE OF RECORDS IN DELINQUENCY
AND FAMILY WITH SERVICE NEEDS MATTERS

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee: My name is Abby Anderson; I am the executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to stopping the criminalization of Connecticut's children. We support evidence-based prevention to keep children from entering the system as well as services to help kids who do enter the system to be successful.

The Alliance fully supports S.B. 366 An Act Concerning The Erasure Of Records In Delinquency And Family With Service Needs Matters. This bill would provide for *automatic* erasure and destruction of juvenile records for Families With Service Needs (FWSN) youth and those children convicted of non-Serious Juvenile Offenses, after two years without any additional convictions. The juvenile justice system is intended to be rehabilitative and give youth a second chance. Automatically erasing the records of former juvenile offenders will help to ensure that they can all benefit equally from these functions. This proposal would help eliminate the unintended consequences of a juvenile conviction by ensuring that records – and the stigma they carry with them – are erased and thus not accessible to anyone. (Note: the proposed bill does not change erasure procedures for juveniles convicted of Serious Juvenile Offenses, who will still have to wait four years and petition.)

This would significantly improve current practice, which is not automatic. Today, juvenile records can be erased, but only after a manual request is filed, and even then the requests are not granted 100% of the time. Many families are unaware they can have their records erased, and among those who do, are often unaware of the process. This creates vast racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities between which children do and do not get their records erased. Furthermore, funding to implement automatic erasure has already been allocated in fiscal year 2014 and 2015 budgets and is waiting to be used.

Thank you for your time.

Alliance member organizations: AFCAMP, Center for Children's Advocacy, Center for Effective Practice, CHDI, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, FSW, NAMI Connecticut, Keep the Promise Coalition, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Tow Foundation, The Village for Families and Children