

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by: Catherine Bailey, Legal and Public Policy Director, Connecticut Women's
Education & Legal Fund
Public Hearing: March 24, 2014

Raised Bill No. 5569, *An Act Establishing a Child Nursery Facility at the Connecticut
Correctional Institution, Niantic*

My name is Catherine Bailey and I serve as the Legal and Public Policy Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For 40 years, CWEALF has advocated for policies that protect women's rights and advance equal justice.

We support Raised Bill No. 5569, *An Act Establishing a Child Nursery Facility at the Connecticut Correctional Institute, Niantic*. This bill would require the commissioner of corrections to establish a nursery facility at the CT Correctional Institution, Niantic (also known as York Correctional Institution) for the placement of infants born to women who are being detained pending charges or women who have been committed for eighteen months or less.

CWEALF is a longstanding supporter of reproductive justice for women. This applies equally to women who are incarcerated or held in a correctional institution pending charges. Several research studies show the positive benefits of keeping mothers with their children. These benefits include healthy child development, closer maternal-child bonds, strengthened family connections, and increased positive behavior for the children. Having a secure relationship with a primary caregiver is linked with healthier outcomes for children and increased resiliency throughout life.¹ Benefits to mothers are compelling, as well; studies have shown that keeping inmate mothers with their babies is linked with reduced recidivism.² This is especially true when paired with carefully crafted programming, like educational training in child development and parenting skills, to assist the mothers in nurturing their babies.

We appreciate your consideration of this issue of importance for mothers, babies, and the criminal justice system, and urge your support of this bill.

¹ Sroufe, L.A., Egeland, B., Carlson, E.A. & Collins, W.A. (2005), *The Development of the Person: the Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood*, New York: the Guilford Press.

² Goshin, L., Byrne, M. & Henninger, A. (2012) "Effects of a Prison Nursery Program on Recidivism," Columbia School of Nursing and John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York.