



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

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Testimony Regarding Senate Bill No. 31

AN ACT CONCERNING CONTINUED DELIVERY OF LEGAL SERVICES TO THE POOR

Good morning Senator Coleman and Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Karen Buffkin and I am the Deputy Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management. I am testifying this morning on behalf of Secretary Barnes in support of *Senate Bill 31, An Act Concerning Continued Delivery of Legal Services to the Poor*.

The Governor's proposed bill eliminates the sunset on the changes to the court filing fees that were enacted in 2012 and were set to expire on July 1, 2015. Senate Bill 31 also changes the distribution of the funds collected as a result of the filing fee increases in 2012 by shifting an additional 25% for a total of 95% of the fee differential to the organization that is administering the programs for the funding of legal services for the indigent. As a result of this shift, the funding for the Judicial Department for information processing and technology would be reduced from 30% to 5%.

In 2012 the legislature increased certain court filing fees and imposed new fees for the dual purpose of providing a more stable funding sources for legal aid for some of our most vulnerable citizens. This action was taken in response to a significant downturn in interest income from the interest on the lawyers' trust accounts (IOLTA) which served as a major source of funding for legal aid services in the state. Unfortunately during the ensuing period the interest rates have stayed historically low and thus the anticipated funding generated for legal aid remains below the levels necessary to address the projected need for services.

Approving this legislation will make these fee increases permanent and will provide a funding level for legal services that is stable and sufficient to meet projected levels of service need into the future.

Thank you.