Center for Children's Advocacy

TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF SECTION 1 OF HB 5040, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 18, 2014

Good Afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Senator Linares, Representative Betts, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Children,

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of the legal rights of poor children whose care is dependent on Connecticut's judicial, child welfare, health, mental health, education, and juvenile justice systems. Through our work at the Center we have interacted with many children who have suffered abuse and neglect, heard their tragic stories and know the unfortunate shortcomings of the child protection system. Today, we are here in support of raised bill HB 5040 Section 1, An Act Concerning The Department of Children And Families And The Protection Of Children.

We strongly urge you to support this bill because it not only provides greater collaboration between agencies that is needed, but also further protects children from abuse and neglect by allowing DCF to inform other agencies and educational institutions that an employee is on the abuse and neglect registry, thereby preventing further abuse. We also urge you to support this bill because it allows DCF to share information with the State's Attorney and law enforcement about a person who falsely reported abuse and neglect. (See Section 1 (g) (7) and (8)) Many children have been subjected to abuse or neglect investigations due to an angry neighbor who did not like their parents or an angry parent who has lost custody and falsely reported serious accusations. These amendments can prevent such occurrences and strengthen the overall child protection system through this cooperative information-sharing.

The interagency collaboration that will be brought by this proposed bill is crucial for the protection of Connecticut's children. The Department of Public Health (DPH) should be informed when DCF places a licensee of the DPH on the child abuse and neglect registry because many of the DPH employees interact with children everyday. (See Section 1 (g) (11)) Furthermore, superintendents, heads of private schools, and other high level officers in institutions providing care for children should also be informed when their employees are placed on the child abuse and neglect registry, as this can prevent other children from being victims of abuse. (See Section 1 (g) (23))

Also, for the first time, the provisions of this bill would allow for DCF to share case records with the Court Support Services Division in order to track recidivism. (See Section 1 (g)(25)) The absence of the state agencies to determine if juvenile justice youth are actually benefitting from services has been a big impediment to further improvements in the juvenile justice system.

Lastly, the proposed bill requires information sharing with the Birth-to-Three system's referral intake office to provide referrals. (See Section 1 (g) (26)) This will expedite the process by facilitating the enrollment and planning process for the provision of services and also help determine eligibility for substantiated victims of abuse or neglect. Those needing such services will be spared having to fill out information they have already submitted to DCF, allowing them to receive services sooner.

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This raised bill and its amendments are a step in the right direction of fostering interagency information sharing that will hopefully prevent further abuse and neglect of children and expedite the process of providing services to those that are most in need. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

John D'Baptist, Law Student Intern

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