



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony

Children's Committee

March 6, 2014



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**S.B. No. 294 AN ACT CONCERNING CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS AND THE DEPARTMENTS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding S.B. No. 294, An Act Concerning Criminal Background Checks and the Departments of Children and Families and Developmental Services. This bill requires annual criminal background checks for all employees of DCF and the Department of Developmental Services who work directly with individuals receiving services from each department.

This legislation would require annual criminal background checks for approximately 2,800 DCF employees.

DCF conducts pre-employment criminal history checks for all employees and requires our employees to notify the Department regarding arrest, conviction or the loss or suspension of a driver's license. Failure to notify the Department may result in disciplinary action. Below are links to the applicable DCF policies:

Off-Duty Employee Misconduct Policy (DCF Policy 7-4-3.2)

<http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2639&Q=424306>

Loss or Suspension of Driver's License (DCF Policy 7-4-3.11)

<http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2639&q=400560>

Arrest or Conviction of Employee (DCF Policy 7-4-3.15)

<http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2639&Q=385706>

We believe that the current system works and provides the necessary safeguards without the added expense of annual criminal background checks.

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**H.B. No. 5304 AN ACT PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS FOR YOUTH UNDER THE CARE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding H.B. No. 5304, An Act Preventing Homelessness for Youth Under the Care of the Commissioner of Children and Families. With specified exceptions, this bill would require DCF to: keep children and youths under the care and custody of the department unless the child or youth has a suitable residence that is reasonably expect to remain available for at least a year post discharge; provide aftercare services for a minimum of 45 days to DCF clients that are age



eighteen or older following release from care to age twenty-one; and allow children and youths to be discharged to a nonrelative, nonguardian adult if the Juvenile Court concurs that it is in the child or youth's best interest to do so.

The bill would also ensure legal representation for children and youths who have been involuntarily discharged from the care and custody of the department, or placed in permanent legal guardianship situations.

While we concur with the intent behind this legislation, we are concerned about the imposition of additional mandates without the sufficient resources necessary to address the service needs of homeless youth. It will take a substantial amount of time for DCF to locate safe, appropriate, and sustainable housing for young adults for more than 45 days as called for in subsection (d) of section 1. Many youth have no income, relatives, resources or skills to live independently and maintain an apartment on their own without supports. Also, many of our youth in post-secondary education are unable to live without financial and service supports even with a 90 day extension past their graduation date. They are unable to locate employment to earn a livable wage in that time frame. Family/relative supports are not an option to them and many of these youth are facing homelessness.

By way of background, the General Assembly enacted sections 17a-62a and 17a-62b of the General Statutes in 2010 and included a \$1 million dollar appropriation in the FY 2011 budget. This funding was eliminated in the adopted FY 2012-2013 budget. DCF subsequently sought other resources to help support homeless youth. In November 2011, the Connection Inc., the DCF contracted provider for supportive housing for families (SHF), agreed to allocate existing contract funds from the SHF program to pilot a housing program for youth. The pilot, called the Young Adult Supportive Housing (YASH) Program, sought to create a system of care to prevent or end homelessness for youth that are struggling to maintain safe and stable housing after leaving foster care. The Connection Inc. agreed to serve 36 youth annually, using approximately \$1.5 million from the existing SHF appropriation. Youth participating in this pilot have the opportunity to gain employment and/or vocational or higher education while living in their community. Youth re-connect with family or friends or build a new network of support and resources to maintain their success and continued growth into adulthood.

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