

March 6, 2014

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Senator Linares, and Representative Betts of the Children's Committee:

This written testimony is in favor of Senate Bill #294, An Act concerning criminal background checks and the Department of Children and Families and Developmental Services.

My name is Dr. Marcy Kane and I am a CT licensed Psychologist that has been working with children and families in CT for the past 15 years, both as a practitioner delivering behavioral health services and currently supervising close to 200 employees within a non-profit organization in the Northwestern portion of the State. I am intimately aware of the vulnerable and multi-need families that are served by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as well as the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Some of the children, adolescents and adults served by these State agencies are the most vulnerable individuals in CT, and have significant histories of abuse, neglect and victimization. It is of paramount importance that we ensure a competent and high quality workforce is available to support these families throughout our State. One of the key components of a competent and high quality workforce is to ensure the ongoing monitoring of qualifications of our employees who are responsible for the delivery of treatment, support and advocacy services provided to vulnerable children and families.

Of paramount importance must also be maintaining the competence and qualifications of the workforce responsible for the care and guardianship of vulnerable children and adults who are under the custody of the above State agencies. Employees of DCF and DDS must be subject to both criminal and child protective background checks to ensure that there are NOT any factors that could affect the quality of the services or the health, safety and welfare of the clients they serve. Currently, these background checks are done solely at hire and not repeated any other point during employment. I am writing today in support of both annual Criminal and annual Child Welfare Service History checks to be conducted on caseworkers/social workers employed by DCF and DDS.

It is of note that community providers who are paid through State funds to deliver services must conduct criminal and child protective service history checks every two years at a minimum and must present this evidence at licensing visits conducted by DCF. Said providers are also held responsible for the costs of these annual checks. It would be of equal expectancy and required by ethical practice to require above said agencies whom are not only responsible for delivering similar support and advocacy services, but in many instances, the legal guardianship for the clients they serve.

Thank you very much for your service and your time in reviewing such an important issue.