



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
Regarding S.B. 1135: An Act Establishing a Sustainable Path for Maintaining the
Budget Reserve Fund and Reducing the Effect of Revenue Volatility on the State
Budget**

Abby Anderson, Executive Director
Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee
April 23, 2015

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Abby Anderson; I am the executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to stopping the criminalization of Connecticut's children. We work to reduce the number of youth who enter the system and ensure the juvenile justice system is safe, fair and effective for those who are involved. In alignment with that mission, the Alliance is in favor of S.B. 1135

S.B. 1135 seeks to reduce the effect of revenue volatility on our state's budget. I testify in favor of this effort, as well as in favor of higher revenue in the upcoming fiscal year to avoid harmful cuts to crucial public services. Connecticut's juvenile justice system has made great strides in the past decade. The system is shrinking even after we included 16- and 17-year-olds as eligible in the juvenile justice system. Fewer youth are incarcerated pre- and post-adjudication (found guilty). This focus on better practice has also resulted in a slightly less expensive system as investments in front end programming have led to savings in back-end incarceration.

Here in Connecticut, and nationally, we know that without quality services in the children's mental health, education and community services systems, more youth end up in the juvenile justice system by default. Continuing cuts to social services that make youth and families more vulnerable could lead to an increasing use of the juvenile justice system – the most expensive way to address youth and family needs.

The Governor's budget cuts nearly \$600 million from programs critical to families across the state. Spending on children and families makes up a third of the budget, but half of the cuts. **In difficult budget times like these, we don't believe that the only option the state should consider is cuts to services. We support this committee finding responsible ways to raise revenue.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.

Alliance member organizations: AFCAMP, Center for Children's Advocacy, Center for Effective Practice, CHDI, Connecticut Junior Republic, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, FSW, NAMI Connecticut, Keep the Promise Coalition, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Tow Foundation, The Village for Families and Children