



Testimony of
Melodie Peters, President
AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO

Judiciary Committee
April 1, 2015

SB 951 AN ACT CONSOLIDATING CRIMINAL JUSTICE, JUVENILE AND FAMILY SERVICE PROGRAMS

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Melodie Peters and I am the President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of union of nearly 30,000 public and private sector employees including the Judicial Professional Employees Union that represents juvenile probation officers, adult probation officers and court support services employees.

I am submitting testimony in opposition to SB 951 An Act Consolidating Criminal Justice Juvenile and Family Service Programs. Having the Judicial Branch at the helm of our court support services division has led to a drop in the state's 24 month adult probation re-arrest rate from 47% in 2007 to 4% in 2013¹. This has been a dramatic drop when considering that they have been serving a population of over 55,000. During this same time period, our family services section developed the first tool in the nation for family civil intake screening, and our adult probation and bail services section was the first statewide system in the nation to be accredited. This is the kind of work that needs to be recognized for what our Court Support Services and our Judicial Branch have done.

I applaud the Governor for addressing the issue of a second chance society, but I believe that the best way to administer his proposal is through our court support services division as it currently stands. Our members at the court support services division have already been addressing the tenets that incorporate a second chance society. They have tailored their work to help our residents who are on probation build the skills they need to become a valuable member of our society, while reducing recidivism.

It has yet to be seen, what kind of cost savings will be achieved when these services are displaced and relocated. By keeping the juvenile and adult probation services under the Judicial Branch we are allowing a team that has worked well and built off of each other's strengths to continue working together sharing their best practices, while keeping costs down.

¹ Connecticut Judicial Branch. *2014 Program Report Card: Judicial Branch – Adult Probation*.
http://www.jud.ct.gov/statistics/RBA/adult_probation.pdf

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.