

**TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY**  
**IN SUPPORT OF SB 842, AN ACT CONCERNING FOSTER CHILDREN AND THE**  
**DESIGNATION OF SURROGATE PARENTS AND**  
**HB 5658, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL SURROGATES,**  
**THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND CHILDREN REQUIRING**  
**SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Committee on Children  
February 17, 2015

Submitted by Hector Glynn

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am a Vice President for the Village for Families and Children, a nonprofit dedicated to Connecticut's children and youth. .

I am testifying in **support of SB 842 and HB 5658, as amended**, which would ensure that youth in Connecticut's juvenile justice system have equal access to educational opportunity, by extending the right to an educational surrogate to all juvenile justice-involved youth with special education needs. I support these bills for two reasons: children in the juvenile justice system demonstrate the most serious academic failure of any group of youth and are in *desperate* need of this assistance, and many parents need the expertise of an educational surrogate to secure the appropriate educational placements and services for their child.

The most recent Connecticut data shows a distressing achievement gap between students in the juvenile justice system and their peers. For example, in 2013, only 2.6 percent of students in USD #2 achieved "goal" level on the CAPT (Connecticut Academic Performance Test) in reading, compared with 48.5 percent of children statewide. Only 21.1 percent of students in USD #2 met the lower benchmark of "proficiency" in reading in 2013, compared with 81 percent of students statewide.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, data from CJTS indicate 60% of the youth there have been identified with special education needs.

To meet the needs of these children and youth often highly individualized programs are needed. Individualized approaches that build off the students strengths can help remediate achievement gaps, but to often these approaches are not written into children's plans and/or enforces. Educational surrogates have been successful in securing appropriate plans for children committed to DCF for child welfare reasons, especially when these children are discharged to their home communities or travel from one foster home and one school system to another

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<sup>1</sup> <http://solutions1.emetric.net/CAPTPublic/CAPTCCode/Report.aspx>

For the reasons noted above, we strongly support **SB 842 and HB 5658 as amended.**

Respectfully submitted,

Hector Glynn  
Executive Director

