

TESTIMONY OF
Scott Wells,
Options Employment and Educational Services,
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 Scott Wells

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

I submit this testimony in support of SB 842 and HB 5658.

1. **My name is Scott Wells. I am director of Options Employment and Educational Services and The Center for Advocacy Research and Education of Connecticut, Inc.**
2. **I have provided, for approximately 20 years, services to special education identified youth and young adults. My staff and I, have helped hundreds of students develop their abilities to competitively perform in secondary and post-secondary educational and employment settings.**
3. **A number of the students we have worked with have been DCF committed.**
4. **I have witnessed the outcome of hundreds of PPT's.**
5. **I have formed a few simple conclusions.**
 - **Students act out because they are upset. The most upset of these students are those with unmet special education needs and that have required DCF involvement. They should be upset.**
 - **The local special education departments are not advocates for the students but exist to provide the least amount of support to help the students meet their school requirements.**

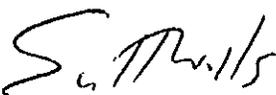
- **Students that act out are generally treated behaviorally and punitively which overshadows addressing their emotional and learning needs.**
- **When these students are placed out of their local school it is generally with other students with behavioral problems, which many times reinforces behavioral problems. This is not necessarily due to the staff interventions but the peer group social dynamics that develop.**
- **However, when these students are placed in programs that address their special education learning and emotional needs negative behaviors decrease and education and healing begins.**
- **Lastly, IF student's rights to an appropriate education are going to be supported and these students found educational placements that meet their learning and emotional needs there must be an independent advocate.**

These advocates must;

- **Understand the special education needs of their student**
- **Have a working knowledge of the PPT process to include mediation and due process**
- **Have a working knowledge of different types of education settings and models**
- **And who will visit the students programs regularly to ensure the programs continue to meet students' needs.**

The existing group of Surrogate Parents are the most experienced cost effective advocates for this job.

An example of this is the case of Anna who is here to testify today. Anna is a young lady whose life could have taken a significant turn for the worse if not for her surrogate; accessing her needs, investigating educational models and advocating for her educational placement.


Scott Wells MA
2/15/15