



***Division of Public Defender Services
State of Connecticut***

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**Testimony of
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OFFICE OF CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 5, 2015**

Proposed Senate Bill 307

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM FOR
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PROGRAMS AND
FACILITIES**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of *Proposed Senate Bill 307, An Act Implementing a Quality Assurance Program for Department of Children and Families Programs and Facilities*. This proposal would require the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to adopt the "Performance Based Standards" system of monitoring and conditions in youth correctional facilities. Performance-based Standards (PbS) for Youth Correction and Detention Facilities is a program for agencies and facilities to identify, monitor and improve conditions and treatment services provided to incarcerated youths using national standards and outcome measures. PbS was launched in 1995 by the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) after a study of the conditions for confinement across the United States revealed unacceptable conditions in youth serving facilities. PbS asks participants to collect and analyze data to target specific areas for improvement.

PbS is currently used by the Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division (CSSD) to monitor climate and conditions at the state detention facilities and the contracted community detention providers. Having DCF and CSSD use the same performance system would allow for comparison and possibly continuation of programming. While the detention centers are designed to be more short term facilities,

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they serve the same children who ultimately end up at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) or the Pueblo Unit. It also provides the opportunity to compare data with similar facilities in other states, since PbS maintains comparison data points for all jurisdictions who participate.

In a recent report to the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee, the Child Advocate indicated that restraints and seclusions at CJST had increased. This increase has continued even as the population at the facility has leveled off or dropped in the past few months. If both DCF and CSSD were using the same set of facility monitoring standards, one could compare the data from the two agencies, track the causes and the effectiveness of the responses. It would make sense to have both CSSD and DCF provide quarterly reports to the Child Advocate, and the Office of Chief Public Defender respectfully suggests that this committee amend the proposal to include that requirement.

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