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**TESTIMONY OF AFRICAN CARIBBEAN AMERICAN PARENTS
OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, INC. (AFCAMP)
SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 841
AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE CHILDREN'S MENTAL,
EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLAN**

FEBRUARY 24, 2015

Submitted by: Ann R. Smith, JD, MBA
Executive Director

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc. (AFCAMP) in support of Raised Bill No. 841. AFCAMP is a parent-driven nonprofit organization with a mission to educate, empower and engage parents and community to improve quality of life for children with special needs and others at risk of education inequity or system involvement. We receive many requests for advocacy assistance from parents and caregivers of children who struggle to access needed services for their children and youth who have mental, emotional and behavioral health conditions.

During a time in their lives when parents and caregivers are facing innumerable personal and familial challenges, the very systems that they turn to for help pose additional challenges. Needing services to help their children and supports for their family, parents and caregivers often must struggle to negotiate a children's behavioral health system that is fragmented and unable to provide a full continuum of services.

With the passage of P.A. 13-178, which required the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to develop a children's behavioral health plan for all of Connecticut's children, the legislature took the first step in addressing the fragmentation and service gaps. I was privileged to serve on the Advisory Board that worked with DCF on that plan. That work was only the beginning and there is much more to be done.

By establishing an implementation advisory board, Raised Bill No. 841 takes the next step toward ensuring a high quality, comprehensive behavioral healthcare system for Connecticut's children and youth.

AFCAMP urges you to act favorably on Raised Bill No. 841.

Respectfully submitted.