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Written Testimony in support of HB 5860: An Act Recognizing Probate Court Employees As
State Employees.

February 17, 2015

Thank you for holding a public hearing on legislation that will recognize us probate court employees as state employees and give us the right to collectively bargain. This change in statute is long overdue.

I have served as a Probate Court Officer in the New London Regional Children's Probate Court for 8.5 years. It is my job to work on behalf of some of our state's most vulnerable, often neglected and abused children. When children have parents who are unwilling or unable to care for them, their relatives turn to the probate courts to avoid foster care placements. I work closely with the families, attorneys, DCF and Judges involved in these complex matters.

It's important to note that my clinical supervisor is a state employee (Probate Administration) and it is state employees and policies at Probate Administration that unilaterally determine my salary, vacation time and when/if I get a pay increase. Statutes would have you believe that it is the judges who have the power to run their courts and make these decisions, but that has simply not been the case since the consolidation. Probate Administration decides nearly all of the conditions of my employment. I am paid by the state of CT, I have state of CT health insurance, I endured a wage increase freeze from 2008 - 2014 like many state employees, yet without the job security "real" state employees were afforded.

I support this bill because it is fundamentally an issue of fairness. I eventually did get the raise I deserved after several years but employees need a system where we can have issues resolved in a timely and reasonable manner. Recognizing probate court employees as state employees and providing us the right to form a union would fix this broken system. It would give us a voice. I urge you to support this bill. Thank you very much for your consideration.