



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE  
FOR THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 27, 2015**

**IN OPPOSITION TO H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET  
FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING  
APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO  
REVENUE**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Abby Anderson; I am the executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to stopping the criminalization of Connecticut's children. We work to reduce the number of youth who enter the system and ensure the juvenile justice system is safe, fair and effective for those who are involved. In alignment with that mission, the Alliance strongly opposes the Governor's proposal in *H.B. No. 6824 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017, And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related To Revenue* to move the juvenile justice functions of CCSD to DCF. I also speak to you this evening as co-chair of the Keep the Promise Children's Committee, which is equally concerned about this proposed change.

Youth crime has been dropping in Connecticut for years. Even after the state added 16- and 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system (they used to be tried as adults), Connecticut still spent \$2 million less on juvenile justice than it had a decade earlier. We are safer today and we are spending less money on juvenile crime. This proposal dismantles the system that brought us those benefits. SUNY Albany is in the process of evaluating the outcomes of the Raise the Age change to CT's system. The researchers recently reported that, comparing samples from 2009, when 16-year-olds were adults, and 2010, when 16-year-olds were juveniles, 16-year-olds processed as juveniles are about 38% less likely to be re-arrested in the two-year follow-up as those processed as adults in the prior year.<sup>1</sup> CSSD was responsible for 97% of the system that achieved those outcomes.

The national best practice and trends are towards juvenile justice systems that are more in-home and community focused. CSSD is responsible for the 97% of the system that does that element of the work. It runs detention and a host of programs that hold kids accountable while supervising them in the community. It also has developed strategies to divert kids from the system entirely when appropriate. DCF is responsible for youth who have been deemed to need out-of-home placement and incarceration, 3% of the total juvenile justice population. The juvenile justice expertise it has developed is around those elements. DCF's area of specialization in juvenile justice is the opposite of the specialization and expertise the system must emphasize to continue the kinds of high quality outcomes for public safety (smaller system, lower recidivism) and youth that the state has recently achieved and been lauded for. From a purely structural view, DCF is not right for the job of running juvenile justice in Connecticut.

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<sup>1</sup> Kurlychek, M. and Fowler, E. University of Albany, *Preliminary Draft Raise the Age: Evaluating Connecticut's Experience*. Preliminary Draft. Presented to Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, February 11, 2014. P. 10

From an economic point of view, incarceration is by far the most expensive way to deal with delinquency. Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy, a program that works with youth and their families, costs about \$10,000-\$12,000 for 5 months of treatment. In contrast, using DCF's projected current fiscal year rate, placement at CJTS, typically 6 months, costs \$133,920. As stated above, DCF's experience and area of expertise runs towards incarceration and not data-driven, community-based services, which are much less expensive and show positive outcomes for public safety and youth.

CSSD religiously collects and analyzes data. This drives its practice. When consultants from Georgetown University attempted to analyze DCF's juvenile parole practices, they concluded: "The DCF's Division of Juvenile Services was able to provide only the most elementary data for the system analysis in this report. The data that appears in this report was cobbled together from various sources. It took substantial time and effort to assemble even the most basic data. The lack of access to data is a significant limitation in Connecticut's DCF-Juvenile Services division." Though we know that DCF has made considerable effort to improve its data collection and reporting since the Georgetown report came out 18 months ago, it does not have the history, culture, and experience of data-driven decision-making and continuous quality assurance that is a hallmark of CSSD's work. It is this obsession with data that leads to successful programs, reduced recidivism and the cost savings the system has achieved. Why undo this system and risk these outcomes and savings?

Speaking for the Alliance and KTP Children's Committee, we strongly object to the proposed \$10 million cut to pre-adjudication services. These are the programs that meet young people's needs before they enter into the deepest – and costliest – end of the juvenile justice system. These are the services used by the youth in the juvenile justice system – many of them – that have mental health needs. Studies have found that the majority of Connecticut children in detention have trauma histories. We have learned through the implementation of Raise the Age that investment in the pre-adjudication segment of the juvenile justice system reduces recidivism and saves money.

CT has been lauded nationally for its progressive, innovative juvenile justice reforms in the past decade. It has more recently been lauded for the outcomes of those reforms. Moving the juvenile justice functions of CSSD to DCF endangers those outcomes, meaning it undermines not just the well-being of children, but also public safety and the financial savings, reduced recidivism, and better youth outcomes that have been achieved for the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.

**Alliance member organizations:** AFCAMP, Center for Children's Advocacy, Center for Effective Practice, CHDI, Connecticut Junior Republic, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, FSW, NAMI Connecticut, Keep the Promise Coalition, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Tow Foundation, The Village for Families and Children