

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a Connecticut attorney.

And I must say that, I concur with State Senator Kevin Witkos when he wrote: "the hidden cut buried in the appendix section of \$32 million" is an "outright elimination of state funds for the Connecticut Probate System."

Such a cut in funding would "seriously cripple" vital social services--especially to the poor, the mentally ill and the handicapped--if it were to be passed into law.

What most people in Connecticut might not realize is just how much the probate courts do for those who need it most in our State.

Historically, the Probate Court system administered estates and wills and the distribution of assets. However, as Senator Witkos points out, "In recent years, the system has also handled cases involving children or adults who need to be cared for by others. This includes issues related to mental health, absent parents, adoptions, substance abuse, and intellectual disabilities."

If this Bill is passed, the court system would be forced to operate solely on fees from the people who use the courts and they would still be expected to provide the same level of services as they do now.

As Senator Witkos points out, "Eliminating \$32 million in funds that Probate Courts rely on leaves only one unsettling option: Probate Courts may be forced to raise fees to cover costs. A fee that averages \$150 currently, for example, would have to increase to nearly \$800 just to self-sustain the system.

Increasing fees, would burden the most vulnerable citizens who need the social service support offered by the Probate courts. These services include families who have to get a loved one mental health care or substance abuse treatment; people who need conservators to help them manage their finances-- as well as children who need to be removed from abusive parents and placed with a guardian ad litem, etc.

In sum, Connecticut's Probate Courts, have served the people for over 300 years. These courts play a much more important role in today's society than ever before. To eliminate all the funding for these courts is, in my opinion, a grievous mistake.

The State must not eschew its responsibility to those who need the Probate Courts most--our abused children, our mentally ill, and all of those who are most vulnerable and most in need.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
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