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Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Connecticut General Assembly
Judiciary Committee

Re: Raised Bill No. 5505: An Act Concerning Family Court Proceedings
OPPOSED

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to 5505. I have been practicing Family Law and Juvenile Law for nine years. These areas of the law are highly emotional and sensitive in nature. I have been appointed to represent over three hundred children as either their attorney or as their guardian ad litem in the Juvenile and Family Courts. I would estimate that over eighty percent of my cases have entered into an agreement and not needed a fully contested trial. I would estimate that the majority of the family members that I have worked with have been satisfied with my assistance.

Further, I would estimate that over eighty percent of my appointments have been at state rates paid by the state. I have had many state rate cases where I have been paid the flat fee amount of \$500 and then invested over sixty hours in the cases; thus, for those cases my hourly rate was less than the Connecticut minimum wage. This does not include accounting for the cost of renting an office, phones, internet, and insurance,

Therefore, I dispute that notion that the "fix" is in with the GALs. Like with any profession, you will have good and bad apples. My belief is that a select few disgruntled parents who have the time and motivation to seek retribution for what they consider injustices to themselves are driving the Connecticut General Assembly to do their bidding.

My law partner, Brian Chizinski, joins me in opposition to 5505.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,
Chris Oakley
Attorney-at-Law