



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

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Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 11, 2015

**Senate Bill 1030, An Act Implementing Recommendations Of The Task
Force To Study Methods For Improving The Collection
Of Past Due Child Support**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in support of *Senate Bill 1030, An Act Implementing Recommendations of the Task Force to Study Methods for Improving the Collection of Past Due Support*.

At the outset, I would like to thank Senator Paul Doyle, who served as the chairperson of the Task Force that met prior to last year's session, as well as the other members of the Task Force, for their work on this important issue.

This bill would enhance Connecticut's efforts to collect child support for the needy mothers and children of our state by implementing many of the Task Force's recommendations. While the Judicial Branch supports the bill, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to two key provisions. Section 2 of the bill permits Judicial Marshals to serve a copy of a *capias mittimus* – as opposed to the original order – on any person in their custody or in a courthouse. As members of the Committee may recall, the General Assembly authorized Judicial Marshals to provide service in these limited instances in 2011. Allowing the Judicial Marshal to serve a copy of the *capias* order – just as DSS Special Police Officers and State Marshals may do pursuant to C.G.S. 52-56(d) – ensures a greater likelihood of success because the marshal will not need to locate the original order and wait for it to be brought to the courthouse.

I should also note that the ability to serve a copy of the *capias* in these limited instances is sufficiently important to the Branch that we have included an identical provision in our Court Operations bill, S.B. 1033, *An Act Concerning Court Operations*.

Section 9 of the bill authorizes one million dollars to be appropriated to the Judicial Branch to increase staffing in our Support Enforcement Services (SES) unit. While I recognize that funding is a matter for the Appropriations Committee to consider, and that this is a particularly difficult budget year, I would note that 2/3 of state expenditures in this area are reimbursed by the federal government. I would also like to take this opportunity to comment on our current staffing level.

SES, as members of the committee may be aware, is responsible for monitoring and enforcing child support orders, as well as for all day-to-day contact with both custodial and non-custodial parents. Incredibly, our SES officers have a caseload average of 2200 cases each; with caseloads this large, the officers can do little but to respond to the most urgent child support needs of their clients and fulfill their statutory duties to initiate, facilitate, and present contempt to modification motions in court.

Connecticut currently ranks in the bottom 1/3 of states in the percentage of child support collected. I urge you to support this bill so that we may begin to improve on our percentage of money collected for the benefit of Connecticut's children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.