

Testimony Supporting:

S.B. 427, AAC Children in the Juvenile Justice System and Guardianship Appointment; H.B. 5621, AAC Human Trafficking; and H.B. 5623, AAC Violence Against Women and Victims of Human Trafficking

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Judiciary Committee

March 14, 2016

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We submit this testimony on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

Connecticut Voices for Children supports Senate Bill 427, House Bill 5621, and House Bill 5623, which all work to improve outcomes for children in Connecticut.

S.B. 427, An Act Concerning Children in the Juvenile Justice System, proposes automatic records erasure for formerly delinquent children who do not become re-involved with the juvenile justice system for two years. While we commend the state for its existing juvenile records erasure procedure, the current system requires youth to petition to have their records erased. Lack of knowledge about how to access the records erasure procedure prevents this option from being equally available to all of our children and families. Research suggests that juvenile records can adversely impact job-seeking, housing, and other efforts.¹ By automating the records erasure procedure for youth who stay out of trouble, the state can ensure a fair chance at rehabilitation for all youth. Children in our juvenile justice system are among the state's most vulnerable; by ensuring equal access to a meaningful second chance, the state can ensure that the racial and socioeconomic disproportionalities present at all levels of juvenile justice involvement do not continue to adversely affect all youth in care.

H.B. 5621, An Act Concerning Human Trafficking, and H.B. 5623, An Act Concerning Violence Against Women and Victims of Human Trafficking, together strengthen protections for children who are victims of human trafficking. By raising the age of prosecution for prostitution from 16 to 18, the proposed bill serves as a logical extension of existing state efforts to prevent and respond to human trafficking. The trafficking of children is a critical concern, and

¹ See 2016 Juvenile Law Center report, "Future Interrupted: The Collateral Damage Caused By Proliferation of Juvenile Records," available at juvenilerecords.jlc.org.

Connecticut has long recognized the need to protect young human trafficking victims.² These children are survivors of human trafficking, and are in need of our support.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions.

Thank you,

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² For more, see Connecticut Voices for Children's 2011 report, "Connecticut's 2010 Safe Harbor Law: Protecting Child Victims of Sex Trafficking in Connecticut," Cari Carson and Anne-Marie Hillman, available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/jj11safeharbor.pdf>.