

**TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY  
REGARDING H.B. NO. 5044, *ADJUSTMENTS TO THE STATE OF  
CONNECTICUT BUDGET*, IN SUPPORT OF THE RESTORATION OF  
GENERAL FUND SUPPORT FOR THE PROBATE COURT SYSTEM**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a private, non-profit legal organization affiliated with the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy.

The Center for Children's Advocacy **supports** the restoration of general fund support for the Probate Court System. Restoring funding to the Probate Court System is essential to address the needs of the most vulnerable children and youth in our State: those who experience abandonment, abuse or neglect as children or are disabled and seek the protection of the Probate courts in guardianship, termination of parental rights and emancipation proceedings among other.

Probate courts are essential in our system of justice: they offer simple, direct access to legal proceedings in a forum that by design allows expeditious and non-threatening services to those seeking access to legal relief. As such, they meet a critical need for thousands of Connecticut's poor by helping to mitigate their legal needs particularly those who lack the assistance of counsel.

As a result, the number of cases involving children and other non-decedent related matters such as mental health, and intellectual disability account for more than 1/2 of the Probate system's caseload. At the same time these cases use up nearly 2/3 of the Probate budget. In 2015, the General Fund paid for approximately 25% of the Probate Court budget and the remaining 75% was collected through fees. Going to a funding system that relies solely on fees collected from those who seek assistance from the Probate court will certainly have a disproportionate and negative impact on Connecticut's poor as it will limit access to those who cannot afford to pay fees and limit the Probate system's ability to respond to the special needs of vulnerable populations.

**We hope that you are compelled to restore general fund support to the Probate Court system. In doing so you will ensure that poor children, youth and families in Connecticut have access to an indispensable forum in our system of justice.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Edwin D. Colon, Esq.  
Staff Attorney