



Testimony of
Michael Barry, Secretary
Judicial Professional Employees Union, AFT Local 4200A
Appropriations Committee
February 19, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Michael Barry and I am a Juvenile Probation Officer at the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters in Rockville. I have also worked in the New Haven and Harford Juvenile Courts. In my sixteen years as a Juvenile Probation Officer I have seen evidence based practices be implemented and Connecticut has become a leader in juvenile justice and reducing recidivism in young people. Part of this success can be attributed to having proper staffing of juvenile probation officers. We have moved Family with Service Needs (FWSN) cases out of the Courtroom to a probation staff that is dedicated to serving the unique needs of youth who have not been arrested; instead, they are truant from school or have issues within their homes. The Judicial Branch has met the challenge of raising the age of a juvenile to 17 rather than 15 because of our uniquely trained staff. Our training academy has expanded mandatory classes on Cultural Competency and Family Engagement as well as training tools to identify not only a juvenile's risks and needs, but also their strengths. We have been able to maintain specialized caseloads including the very successful Gender Responsive Probation. Studies have shown that girls become involved in the Court system for different reasons than boys. Girls enter the criminal justice system with a set of life circumstances that include a much higher rate of trauma and abuse. These clients are serviced by a uniquely trained group of officers within our department. We juvenile probation officers around Connecticut are getting the job done, but there is much more work to do to continue to reduce recidivism.

I thank for your support of juvenile justice initiatives in the past and I hope you can give us every consideration in this difficult year. The work that we do, in the long run, will save the state money by keeping people out of juvenile detention facilities and adult corrections. Since 2007, our 24-month juvenile re-arrest rates have dropped nine percent. In other words, there about 180 fewer rearrests of juvenile probationers than there were in 2007. These numbers can be attributed to the work of my colleagues and the vital services of our in-home based therapeutic programs and our Child, Youth and Family support centers around the state. I believe that any cuts to the Juvenile Justice system and Juvenile Probation Officers would be detrimental to the children and families that we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.