Testimony of Christine Keys

In Support of RB 6516 An Act Concerning the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee
Appropriations Committee April 3, 2017

Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron and members of the Appropriations Committee; my name is Christine Keys, and I am the Director of Foster Care, Adoption and Youth Development Programs at Klingberg Family Centers. Klingberg Family Centers is a multi-service, non-profit organization based in New Britain, CT, that provides statewide mentoring, prevention/diversion services, foster care and clinical services to at-risk youth, including those involved in the juvenile justice system. It is through this work that I am supporting RB 6516 An Act Concerning the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee.

RB 6516 provides support for the Community-Based Diversion System plan that focuses on identifying and addressing the underlying needs and symptoms of a child’s negative behavior and enables early intervention supports to be implemented. The plan further maximizes the coordination and utilization of existing mechanisms to connect children and youth, their families/caregivers, and school systems with community resources. The Community-Based Diversion System leverages the Connecticut Children’s Behavioral Health Plan (PA-13-178), enhances service delivery and essentially supports a more uniformly structured, overall enhancing and effective system.

Over the past seven years, Klingberg Family Centers has provided program services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system as well as work collaboratively with partner agencies serving the same population, including Youth Service Bureaus. RB 6516 creates a coordinating hub which will fill the identified gap of children and youth and their families, falling through the cracks of fragmented care coordination. The challenge before us is the system is not fiscally resourced to implement the diversion system. The funding through the reinvestment of funds to support the YSB services as the Coordinating hub is essential. By creating a diversion system with a Coordinating Hub, there will be: decreased referrals to the Juvenile Court system, increased family engagement, decreased rates of recidivism and the reduction in the costs associated with crime and incarceration.

It is for the reasons stated above that I support HB 6516. It is my hope that the committee will join me in supporting the Community Based Diversion System plan as written and supported by the JJPOC by supporting HB 6516.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christine Keys, LMSW
Klingberg Family Centers