



DATE: Tuesday, February 7, 2017

TO: Committee on Children

FROM: Brunilda Ferraj, Senior Public Policy Specialist

RE: HB 6099: AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF GROUP HOMES MAINTAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Good afternoon Senator Moore, Senator Suzio, Representative Urban, Representative Zupkus and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

My name is Brunilda Ferraj, Senior Public Policy Specialist at the Alliance. The Alliance is Connecticut's statewide association of community nonprofits, which serve over 500,000 people each year and employ almost 14% of Connecticut's workforce.

I am here to voice opposition to HB 6099 An Act Concerning The Operation Of Group Homes Maintained By The Department Of Children And Families.

Group homes are an alternative to warehousing people in large, congregate institutions. DCF community based group homes serve our state's most at-risk youth with complex needs who are in the process of transitioning toward reunification with family, independent living or long-term foster care. Community nonprofits ensure that group homes are home-like residences that provide a physically, emotionally and psychologically safe environment for youth. This atmosphere allows youth to reach appropriate developmental milestones and progress toward their goals while gaining the skills necessary to negotiate a healthy living environment.

Individuals living in group homes share the same rights as everyone else residing in a community. The fact that they live in a group home should not subject them to levels of public scrutiny that other citizens do not have to endure.

We are concerned about the unintended consequences of this proposed legislation. We are strongly opposed to any legislation that would violate an individual's rights to live freely in the community and would reinforce stereotypes about youth with complex needs. We believe this bill may create opportunities for discrimination.

Further, we believe this bill is unnecessary, as group homes are currently subject to rigorous licensing regulations and quality management reviews by DCF. In addition to DCF licensing regulations, nonprofits must comply with detailed contractual obligations.

Community providers have a track record of successfully providing and maintaining a high quality of life for both residents and their neighbors. Community nonprofits work closely with DCF to assure that each individual residing in a group home has appropriate support, and that staff decisions are made to assure that the individual is successful in the community and is receiving the appropriate level of supervision.

Providers are always willing to work with municipalities to ensure the people they serve are welcomed into the communities they choose to live. They work closely with emergency services and others to assure proper planning and response for individuals residing in group homes.

Nonprofits also strive to be good neighbors, while upholding the privacy and other legal rights of individuals residing within their homes. We respectfully request and encourage members of the Committee on Children to do the same by not supporting this bill.

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