Regarding H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Thank you Senator Osten and Representative Walker,

Hello, my name is Dana Forry and I am the Director of the Bridgeport Juvenile Review Board (JRB) and co-Facilitator of the Greater Bridgeport Local Interagency Service Team (LIST). The overarching mission of the LIST is to encourage collaborative efforts among local stakeholders for assessing the physical, social, behavioral, and educational needs of children and youth in their respective communities that leads to juvenile justice involvement, and for assisting in the development of comprehensive plans to address such needs. As you may know, the JRB is a youth court and arrest diversionary program that links young people who have gotten into minor trouble at school or in the community to supports and services and helps them repair the harm done by their actions. JRBs are widely seen to be one of the key reasons the size of the juvenile court has been shrinking over the past decade.

I am writing today representing both the LIST and the Bridgeport JRB to outline my concerns in regards to the proposed State budget. While the budget does not make additional cuts to the juvenile justice system, it falls short of ensuring that the Judicial branch has the resources necessary to support our most at risk youth.

This year, when Governor Lamont was preparing this budget, the Judicial Branch officially requested an additional $28 million dollars in order to develop the menu of community based, residential, and secure

Appropriations Committee
services needed. This budget gives them not one cent more than they got last year - $17 million dollars. We hear concerns every day from police, families, providers and advocates about the state of the juvenile justice system and how it is responding to youth - and yet the budgets passed and proposed significantly undermine the Judicial Branch’s ability to do that very work.

It is easiest to only hold young people accountable. The true, harder narrative is to also hold ourselves and those of you who create and vote to pass budgets accountable for ensuring, or not ensuring the system created to address youth behavior gets what it needs to fulfill its mission.

Thank you Appropriations Committee for reading my testimony today. Please contact me at 203-989-0566 or dforry@ryasap.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dana Forry
RYASAP (Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership)

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