

CHAIRPERSON: Representative Liz Linehan

SENATORS: Moore, Anwar, Kelly, Cohen

REPRESENTATIVES: Linehan, Comey, Green,
Boyd, Hampton, Wilson
Pheanious, Hayes, Kokoruda

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We are actually going into a brief recess and we will begin shortly so the committee is now in recess. Thank you.

[Recess]

REP. LINEHAN (103): Okay thank you all very much for bringing this meeting back to order. Starting the public hearing. Before we begin, just very quickly please note the exits -- the exits in the interest of safety. The two doors in which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In the event of emergency, please walk quickly to the nearest exit. Although I don't anticipate such a thing happening, we always need to be prepared. So, thank you everyone for being here today and I would like to call please, Commissioner Dorantes of DCF. Thank you very much. Welcome Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DORANTES: Thank you. Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Linehan, Senator Kelly, Representative Green, other distinguished members of the Committee on Children. My name is Vanessa Dorantes and I'm the commissioner of the Department of Children and Families. I'm here to testify on raised Senate Bill 158 and ask concerning the Albert J. Solnit Children Center. The

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department supports the intent of this bill, however, respectfully suggest that this stand-alone bill is redundant, and the testimony explains why. Last year the committee on children had Special Act 19-16 an act concerning licensure of Albert J. Solnit Children's Center which directed the commissioner of Department of Children and Families to submit a report recommending a process for Department of Public Health to license the north and south campuses of Solnit Center. The act required DCF to work with the commissioners of DPH and social services and the office of the child advocate in drafting a report. To implement this requirement a working group was organized in August of 2019 and was comprised of representatives from DCF, DPH, DSS, and the Child Advocate's office. The Solnit Center campus's Beacon health options and two privately operated adolescent psychiatric treatment facilities.

The working group met on a biweekly basis through November in order to draft the report which was submitted to the committee earlier this year. For further reference please see Special Act 19-16 which is the Solnit licensing report. The working groups recommendation has already been incorporated into sections 8-10 of House Bill 5020, an act implementing the governor's budget recommendations regarding public health. The governor's proposal goes beyond the language in this bill by requiring DPH to promulgate regulations on licensing the psychiatric treatment facilities at both the north and south campuses as well as requiring the licensure of the psychiatric hospital located Solnit South. Further the governor's budget adjustment allows for six additional nurses and one more

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clinician to be employed at Solnit North and these positions are needed to work towards Solnit North meeting the staffing requirements for licensure recommended in the report. The department does not believe this bill is necessary given the governor's budget proposal and accompanying implementation language. This also -- this testimony is also serving as notification that we have submitted written testimony concerning the fiscal implications of raised bill Number 156 which is an act concerning financial assistance for post-secondary educational expenses for youth adopted through the Department of Children and Families Foster Care program. Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee and I'm available to answer any questions.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much Commissioner. We appreciate you being here and -- and those are some really great points that you made in your testimony. So, to just give you some background. We understand that was a language that was placed in the governor's budget regarding 158, however we also know that sometimes the governor's budget gets chopped up so we believed the Chairs when we were in screening and the ranking members believed that by putting this forth we kind of have a backup because we do believe that this is something of importance and we believe that ultimately if the governor's budget does indeed get amended and this is kept out that we do have a vehicle to ensure that this change happens for the safety of our children so I think that you made a really great point that the governor's budget adjustment does call for additional points and if in fact the governor's budget is put forward without the provisions we can add them back in. So that's

something that was important to us that we had a vehicle to ensure that that does happen because hear on the committee on children the safety of our kids is paramount, so we wanted to make sure we had that. That wasn't really a question. That's just something I wanted to provide for your benefit and to put on the record. With that said are there any questions from the committee? Yes Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you Madame Chair. Commissioner thank you for your testimony. I wanted to clarify and I'm going to talk about 156 and I have seen your written testimony. Thank you so much. So, the fiscal impact that you're calculating I think even in the last session the fiscal impact calculation I'm not sure is accurate. You're looking at the worst-case scenario and the probability of the worst-case scenario is not as likely. If you look at the projections of the current children who are going for higher education, it is very small percentage but because of the worst case scenario example that is being used we are actually taking away the opportunity for from the children who actually need this and the families need this and I think it's worth reconsidering this because it's almost a subgroup for our children and our community on not getting the opportunities that this should be able to avail.

COMMISSIONER DORANTES: I would also suggest that that's the best-case scenario. If we had every child that would have been available during that, every child that meets the criteria related to the adoption prior to the time period that's outlined here. I believe that the CFO at DCF put forth what would be the fiscal note if there were all the children that were eligible but I agree with you

that in, in the spirit of why the law was I mean why the bill was designed. If all of those children came forward to avail themselves of higher education that would be the best case scenario in my opinion but the reason why this was submitted in that way is to offer what the fiscal note would be because you're right with all of the children who met that eligibility criteria by that cut off night, cutoff date avail themselves.

SENATOR ANWAN (3RD): And and one of the reasons Dr. Petit and I had put this forward was for the very purpose that we feel that many of the children of the state are actually left behind and it's about time we actually take care of them as well and give them the opportunity that children after it's almost like a date was set and after that you divide into two groups, one who have opportunities and one do not have opportunities. It does not set well. So I hope you would reconsider your position and your department's position because I don't want any of our children to be left behind.

COMMISSIONER DORANTES: Neither do I.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Okay thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any other questions or comments from committee members? Well, today is an easy day for you, Commissioner. Thank you so very much. I appreciate your testimony. [Laughter] Well, at least we did what we could to make it easy. Senator Slap, please. Is Senator Slap available? He is not. Senator Fasano? We're not having much luck here today. Steven Hernandez. Good afternoon and welcome.

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STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for having us. I am joined today by our lead policy fellow Kaylee Horbil who will be providing some of the testimony today. Again, I am Steve Hernandez and I am the executive director of the legislature's Non-Partisan commissioner on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity. We are here to testify in support of several bills before you. On the first one on the list Senate Bill number 156 there will be testimony later by our one of our lead, I'm sorry one of our fostered and adopted fellows. We created a fellowship at the commission for people who focus on foster and adoption and our lead fellow for that work who is here with us today, Chris Scott will be working with you to create a foster and adoption caucus in the state of Connecticut modeled after a federal caucus so I'm really proud of him. I wanted to say that. I know I'm taking away a little at the thunder you'll be hearing from them later but it's an important cause to understand the special needs of foster and adopted people. Secondly Senate Bills number 157 on the Availability of Feminine Hygiene Products, I will turn to Kaylee.

KAYLEE: Uh so the commissioner does support Senate Bill number 157 which would require local and regional boards of education to provide free feminine hygiene products in middle and high school student bathrooms. Every year, as many as eight million students nationwide are chronically absent meaning that they miss ten percent or more of the school year for any reason. This level of absenteeism predicts poor academic performance as early as Kindergarten and is a warning sign that high school -- that a high school student will drop

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out. In Connecticut 10.7 percent of students are chronically absent. In order to address this issue it is vital that we limit the obstacles that may keep a student out of the classroom. For half of the student population one of those obstacles may be access to the necessary feminine -- feminine hygiene products. Particularly students from low socioeconomic backgrounds access to often - access to expensive free feminine products can provide them with the support necessary to make it through school day so we do support that bill.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Next on House Bill what Kaylee doesn't tell you is she has been with us now, she will have been with us at the end of her deployment for nine months and she is as a function of the lead policy fellowship and we're proud to have had you and we have had really good success with Former Teach for American teachers who are out in the ground. They have the experience with being teachers so we're really happy that we've been able to participate in this program. Nextly for House Bill number 5199 Concerning Probation Periods Following Conviction for Certain Sexual Misconduct Crimes. I just want to put on the record what some of those crimes are. One of them was sexual assault in spousal or cohabiting relationships which may have children in the household. Injury or risk or injury to or impairing the morals of children, the sale of children, commercial sexual abuse of a minor. It was important to put that on the record because as we are thinking about second chances in the state of Connecticut and as we're thinking about how we distinguish between the types of crimes and violations that have a higher risk for recidivism it's important to think of different strategies to

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be able to track those crimes that actually have shown have a higher risk of recidivism not only in the crime itself but other types of crimes as well and it's important to do that so that then we can carve out those crimes that may not have the same level of risk and really deserve a second chance as with other types of crimes and misdemeanors so I really appreciate you bringing this conversation forward furthering the conversation that way. Next on an act concerning the inclusion of shaded areas at new municipal playgrounds and also concerning the prevention of heat stroke related deaths in minors' vehicles. Both of these are related that the risk of injury to heat is really a big concern. We've been working with an interscholastic network run out of Yukon where we're thinking about the adverse effects of heat impact on young athletes. The great thing about your prevention of heat strokes related in motor vehicles is that they are so preventable. What we know is that one thing about having this in the office early childhood it's clever because early childhood is where early parenthood starts as well and what parents don't know sometimes is that a child can wonder into a car and some of the highest risks are when kids wonder or where the children are forgotten in a car and they don't know that often times the degree, the temperature degrees can go up to 100 degrees within minutes so these are all critical considerations and it's important that we provide families and parents with as much information at their disposal because you know this is one of those instances where there's many different entry points of information where you can approach the parent, the better. And then finally on the municipal playgrounds issue, what's interesting is that we've been covering in our

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environmental justice work we've done research, our Yale fellows from the Yale School of Public Health did research on how it is at cities often times because of the lack of green cover in the cities can sometimes be higher in temperature during the summer than some of our suburban areas. So, this is also an equitable access issue. Having shade at our new municipal playgrounds provides an opportunity not only for fairer skinner children to avoid skin cancers and other melanomas but also for all children to avoid the possibility of having heat impacted related illnesses so we really thank you for that legislation. With that, I would be happy to take your questions.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. I appreciate your testimony. You are always so thorough, and I appreciate you testifying on so many bills here today. So, I do have a couple of questions for you on each bill and I think for the benefit of my committee I will start with the first bill and then ask committee members to question about those and go on to the next. Actually I have no questions regarding 156. Do any of my committee members have any questions for him regarding financial assistance for post-secondary education? Okay, hearing none Senate Bill 157 for Kaylee, the act concerning the provision of free feminine hygiene products in middle and high school student bathrooms. One question that I have received recently was the importance of having these items available also in gender neutral bathrooms to ensure that, that anyone who needs them can receive them. Do you, and I know I'm putting you on the spot, but do you have any data about those transgender

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children and how this would affect them if it weren't available for them.

KAYLEE: I don't have any data. I can find some and provide it for you. Definitely, I think that is a very good point having these products in those bathrooms would be very important.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Right, because it makes sense to me. If I'm a transgendered student and those products are not available to me in the bathroom that I choose to use to me that sounds like that would keep someone home from school, right. So, I think that's an excellent point and I appreciate that. Are there any other questions for these two regarding that particular piece of legislation? Yes, Representative Wilson Pheanious.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you. Good morning and thank you for your testimony. My concern about Raised Bill 157 is the broadness of the language and I wonder if that strikes you at all for concern. First of all, it's an unfunded mandate meaning that the Boards of Education are going to have to pick up the cost and the way that this is worded it appears that it would mean every accessible bathroom in the -- in the school and I'm just wondering if you are aware of any funding sources or other opportunities for boards of educations to be able to take advantage of in order to fulfill the you know requirements of the statute. I mean I have no question about the need for such but I'm wondering if it should be more limited. For example, the nurse's office or I don't know some other place where people might who need to go might be able to go because many people can and do afford these products and it's sort of a function of what

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you have to do you know but I realize that there are people that don't and it just seems to me that this bill is so broadly worded that it would require boards of education to provide these products originally to virtually every student in every restroom and I just wonder what your thoughts are on that.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: I really appreciate that question, especially because of the resourcing. So, a few years ago the Commission on the Status of Women created an annual drive where they would collect feminine hygiene products not only for women that were incarcerated, for women that were in nursing, I'm sorry in homeless facilities, in facilities where people of modest means congregated and what we found we had rooms at the commission filled with these products and we couldn't just get them out and deployed soon enough. There was just so much outpouring of community generosity and a real understanding of need. On the question of the breath of this you know individual access and individual choice when it comes to the type of feminine hygiene product that is to be accessible for the individual I think as many options as possible. I think Kaylee's research around chronic absenteeism is really telling here because often times what happens is when a young person isn't ready or hasn't had the education or perhaps some of those great conversations that you have with your family about what to be ready for and what to be looking for and how to be prepared. You know there can be shame. There can be embarrassment. All the things that would keep a young person from leaving school and associating school with an embarrassing or limiting experience so you know I think bringing

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those two together, understanding the science of how kids interact socially and also the fact that in a community there are available resources and sensitivity to this issue. I think that we can start addressing that and bring some of those unfunded costs down.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Well, that would be my concern and again I would wonder. I certainly understand the need. I'm glad somebody is suggesting that it is an issue and it can be a surprise to a young lady needing this kind of thing but I'm just wondering about the full and free availability in every single restroom in a building. That seems, when I think about what our schools can afford and the whole issue of unfunded mandates we look at these and have to look at them with extra scrutiny because the schools in my district can just barely afford to do what they are now doing and not being funded to do so I wondered if this proposal might be strengthened by putting these supplies in an area of easy access like for example I keep saying the nurse's office or somewhere else where people might go without shame but that would not require providing these products for everybody for all purposes in every restroom. I'm just wondering if it doesn't need to be narrowed.

KAYLEE: And I'd just respond to that because I do hear you and I totally absolutely understand the concern because schools are always struggling to find the funds. I know that there are some federal initiative to provide these products. There's an organization called THINK that has worked very closely with legislators to create federal mandates providing these products in schools. The thing I will say that for me as a teacher in an underserved

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school I was providing these products for my students so even if the school isn't providing them somebody is and the other thing I'll say is that my students who had to go to the nurse to get these products often wouldn't want to because that would indicate to other students that there was something going on. I think that you are right. There should be some centralized location. I don't necessarily know. I don't necessarily have an answer to where that should be. It's kind of a tricky situation.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Right well just my concern is just the way the bill was currently worded. As I'm reading it, would require in every accessible bathroom that there be a free supply of products and it just seems excessive to me and I wonder if anyone has ideas about how to either connect schools to these resources you might be talking about which would be good for people to know about or to address that issue.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you Madame Chair. Thank you so much for your testimony. I would like to speak about 157. I think this is important to start to see and I'm glad this bill is here because its going to allow us to have a paradigm shift. Why is it that we are never talking about financial resources or limitations when we are talking about toilet rolls? They're a physiologic need of people, right? And when it comes to women that's a physiologic need. Why does money come into the picture when it's a physiologic need? So it is a responsibility of the school to provide it. Period. Now the fact that we're not seeing things this way

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is because of how as a society we have evolved with confused mindset. The confused mindset is that well it's going to cost more. Well if it's going to cost more let's actually start to figure out how to reduce the toilet roll usage in the schools too. Let's save money on that too. And I think this is important bill and this is going to start to have the conversations which are it's fascinating that you are having this conversation in the year 2020. That is the fascinating part for me. But, I'm glad for the leadership and the people who have brought this forward. I know Senator Bergstein is over here as she will talk about this as well, but I am very happy to see that we are at least in 2020 and reaching the 1900s.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you Senator. Does anyone else want to speak on this particular bill? Okay, now we will move on to 5201, an Act Concerning Prevention of Heat Stroke Related Deaths in Motor Vehicles. I want to thank you very much for testifying in favor of this bill. I'd also like to publicly thank Representative Green, my ranking member who really took an idea that was probably too large and she condensed it in a way that allows us to get to the heart of what needs to be done here so thank you very much Representative for doing that. So, my question for you is what this bill does is will essentially will create a marketing plan for centers to alert parents on how to remind them about heat stroke in cars right? And we are getting them early when people, when kids are at the beginning of their lives and parents are at the beginning of parenthood. I loved how you said that. If and when this bill passes would you be willing to work with

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us on the language on how best to get to those parents?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: 100 percent. You know some of the innovations for instance that parents may or may not know about a lot of parents when they drive the user ways or other map that are available to them to tell them where they're going. A lot of parents, even parents of modest means have telephones. They have smartphones accessible to them. And what's interesting is there is a feature in ways that reminds you to ensure that you didn't leave a child in the car. It's a little pop up that comes up right at your destination so these are things that you know if a parent knew these things were accessible it's an extra click of a button and it really could save a child's life.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): How did I not know that?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Yeah it's pretty cool.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I use Waze every day. How did I not know that?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: It's a setting in Waze. So, what's really neat about that is that those resources are out there and what's also great is that these are preventable deaths so resource plus prevention is you know healthy kids.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's fantastic. Thank you. Does anybody else want to ask questions regarding this particular bill? Okay on 5202 an Act Concerning Inclusion of Shaded Areas at New Municipal Playgrounds. Thank you. I have been saying this for a very long time. In addition to possible heatstroke. In addition to melanoma which is on the rise and burns from these playground

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equipment pieces, and it is an equity issue. You are absolutely right about that, so I appreciate that very much and I'm glad to see you're on board with that. Does anyone have any questions for him regarding that bill? Okay, hearing none let's get to my favorite bill the Act Concerning Probation Periods Following Convictions for Certain Sexual Misconduct Crimes Against Minors. I want to thank you for you testifying in support in this. The committee this year has quite a few pieces of legislation aimed at the prevention of sexual abuse of children and also data collection regarding adult sexual misconduct and in our extensive research we have learned that the community at large really believes that people are not being arrested, convicted, or sentenced appropriately for these crimes but public perceptions do not always equal fact and so when we looked at the numbers it seems that the best way to reduce recidivism regarding these crimes against children is to lengthen those probation times because one of the things apparently that Connecticut does really well is monitor child sex offenders and so that's what we're looking at getting here. It's increasing the period with which the state will be able to monitor people who have committed sexual crimes against children so I appreciate your coming here and testifying in favor of this bill but I'm wondering do you have any ideas on how to possible make that even stronger given that please keep in mind that we also have multiple bills on the prevention side this year but this one is a little bit different in something that the Committee on Children doesn't normally take up so I'm pretty on the spot but are there any convictions in here that you think should be added to this?

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STEVEN HERNANDEZ: So, what's interesting is this is in the context of a larger conversation that we're having about risk that we're having about probation that we're having about second chances you know and sometimes it seems like our laws are flipped on their head you know people who have been convicted of a crime, a non-violent crime are often tracked much much longer than they need to be especially once they've already repaid their debt to society. Not only that they face a lot of discriminatory barriers in housing and work force. So, when you take that, and you compare it to crimes, and you know we included some of the recidivism stats for sexual offenses. It's crimes where there is a higher level of recidivism and society would benefit and kids would benefit from a longer-term vigilance when it comes to certain crimes. Then this serve right sizes this issue, but it also furthers the conversation on well what happens with lower risk offenses. Say for instance a mistaken age between an 18-year-old, a mistaken age let's just call it that. What happens in those situations where the risk is much much less of recidivating? It's important that we start thinking about these things openly because we can balance being the second chance society but also keeping our kids safe by tracking certain types of offenses for a longer period of time.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): So, one of my main concerns is internet predation. This is when we're talking about the safety of children you cannot keep that out of the conversation. This committee has been focused on that and we are looking at that bringing an informational hearing regarding how to keep our kids safe. It's something I've done within my own

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district and I can tell you countless stories, not about something I read in the newspaper or something I read on the internet. Countless stories of children I know who have propositioned online, who have been forced to make videos that are sexual in nature for fear that their parents would be killed if they didn't by someone they met online. These are real issues and it's very hard to prosecute those crimes and those are the crimes that we're really trying to get at here in addition to others but because it's hard to prosecute those crimes a lot of those people are not being punished to the full extent of the law and we're watching them for as long as possible so I believe that this is something that meets in the middles and it is more of a punishment but it's also more preventative as well because the longer we watch them the easier it's going to be to know if they're doing it again.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Well, I'll tell you part of the terms of probation at times can be monitoring what is accessed on the internet. There was just an article today in fact of a site where it was found that there was disproportionate amounts of youth being targeted in for pornography and not only was it accessible to the public but the people in charge of the site are actually promoting violence against young people in the form of videos and all and other consumables so this is a very real issue. You know when you think concurrently of the wild west and the internet can be what a lot of school districts have done and what families have done together with school districts have decided to take over the internet and fill the internet not only with safety mechanisms but also positive prosocial good things that kids can experience on the internet. You know,

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it's here to stay and kids are going to have access to it and some of the things you mentioned are some of these apps that are available for kids that adults exploit so the more we can you know we tell our kids when you go outside cross the street look both ways but we don't give them any instruction or give them any guidance on what to do. See something say something when they're on the internet and we should do more of that.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Well I do. And one final question regarding this. Originally when we spoke about putting this legislation together, one of the ideas that we had was to create a marketing program, not just similar to what the trafficking in person's counsel's person did in buying sex however as someone who is really interested in what they did I can also say I didn't see it anywhere and I should have seen it more so if after this public hearing and when we look at substitute language if we include something on that once again is your commission available to help us create something that would actually work. Are you familiar with what the commission did? The trafficking percentile what that whole marketing scheme was. Do you know why it didn't work and how we can do it better?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: You know I think one of the main things there is compliance. With the trafficking in persons work part of the issue is that the locations where the trafficking is happening are the very locations we need buy in from in terms of disseminating some of this information. So, for instance the Marriott Hotel may be very willing not only to engage in training but also be part of the strategy to ensure that there's no trafficking at the Marriott but there's other establishment that

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may not even want a sign put up in their bathroom that might protect somebody who's being trafficked. What's interesting about this and yes we would love to help so I'll tell you that you know we've had the benefit of Kaylee with us during the summer and next fall we will not only have lead policy fellows but also Yale Public School of Health fellows. We have an ongoing relationship with Yale as well. And what they do is this type of work. They'll actually help us develop things. One of our fellows helped us develop a racial and impact strategy this past summer so they are available to help with this work and there are examples of what we can do. This is an interesting space because there are many more willing participants in spreading the word so I would suggest that if we do do something like this that it's in several languages and there's people that can help us do that as well because as I said the availability of and access for kids on the Wild West that is the internet sometimes they are even more sophisticated at accessing some of these devices than their parents or grandparents are putting that at greater peril and predators know this.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's a really great point and thank you. Just keep in mind when we pass this out of committee it's also going to have to go to the judiciary committee so I hope that you will follow this and let them know as well your thoughts on this and really need to go with it so thank you very much. Are there any other questions for him regarding this? Yes, Representative Wilson Pheanious.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes thank you very much. I'm wondering how whether there's any

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difference in the impact of this proposed legislation if the perpetrator is a minor or was a minor at the time that the crime occurred.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Certainly to our mind there is. I think it's very important to distinguish between children and adults when it comes to so many of these issues. One thing that we found for instance in the trafficking work is that our laws up until very recently just a few years ago still identified children who were exploited for pay as prostitutes and that just doesn't make any sense. For all of the reasons that we leave our, perhaps this committee or this particular issue we know the brain science around development. We know the brain science around early childhood and youth, and I think we should honor that in this case as well. We need to differentiate between the, you know the things that are happening between the children, between and among children and adults who are often times take advantage of that very developmental difference or delay.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And I agree with that. In 2017 we did change that. I was very very proud of that law. I had something to do with it that changed a prostitute to a commercial sex abuse of a minor and we have had some convictions in the state since 2017 regarding that statute so we're really happy about that. And the legislature has taken that under advisement and has worked to change a few statutes to recognize that there is a difference between something that is done by a child with another child as opposed to an adult actually committing sexual misconduct of some sort. I think that is taken into account and that will continue to be taken into account and I'm very proud to say that

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the legislature has done that over the past few years and will continue to do that.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): I hope so. I just don't see it here. I mean I just don't see any reference to that.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yes because it lists certain crimes but yes that is absolutely taken into account for sure.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay is, I'm understanding this legislation what it does is it extends the types of crimes for which the 10-35 years of probation would be applicable.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: To adults who commit these crimes.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): To adults who commit these crimes.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): My concern about minors who commit these crimes still remain so as we watch this proceed I just ask that we be conscious of that because there are many times when young people who, I'm not certainly excusing the crime or talking about that issue but when you're 17 and are accused of doing something and you've got now 10-35 years of probation I'm just hoping that someone will take into account that there are times when we're dealing with minor perpetrators. One size doesn't fit all.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): So, when we're talking about lengthening the time it doesn't mean automatic probation but is still something that is left ultimately during sentencing.

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REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): It's a minimum of 10-35 years.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And I hear what you're saying, and we will absolutely take that under advisement.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): You're welcome. Are there any other questions? Hearing none I think you're done. Thank you very much.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Thank you very much. Thank you all.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Sarah Eagan please. Welcome back.

SARAH EAGAN: Thank you. Good afternoon to the committee. I'm Sarah Eagan. I run the state's Office of the Child Advocate. I wanted to offer testimony on a couple bills that are up for today starting with Senate Bill 158 an Act Concerning the Albert J. Solnit Children's Center. I wanted to, one, acknowledge the committee's work over the last couple of years. I think on this issue the recommendation to eliminate the statutory exemption for the Solnit Center which is a state-run psychiatric treatment facility and campus for children arose out of a fatality and facility investigation that the Office of the Child Advocate published in September 2018. Boy, time flies. It feels like it was just last year but that was a year and a half ago. And that this committee holds a public hearing on the same month. That report dealt with the death by suicide of a 16-year-old girl named Destiny who was 8 months pregnant at the time of her death. She was scheduled to be discharged from the facility the next day to foster care and

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instead died by suicide in the facility. What was learned during that fatality investigation was that part of the Solnit Center had been subject to multiple investigations in the previous six months of serious occurrences which had happened in the facility which had mostly been related to suicide attempts by girls there that had led to multiple findings under federal Medicaid laws that children were quote "in immediate jeopardy of harm". That was the federal regulatory language, due to deficiencies in care and treatment that were found by the Department of Public Health. In addition to those concerns themselves what was also concerning was that there is no framework that the state had for making that information public so while that was going on not through design or malice but while those important investigations and findings were happening in the months prior to Destiny's death this body the legislature was undertaking very significant conversations with the health committee about the licensing and the oversight of Connecticut Valley Hospital and the Whiting Forensic Division which was also similar to Solnit, a state run resolution exempt from outside licensure so the OCA published a report in September of 2018 tracing these legal issues.

What had happened at the facility, there were six suicide attempts in that facility by girls in about a nine-month period of time followed by Destiny's completed suicide and the death of her unborn child. In the wake of that, so we recommended to the committee in that report in the public hearing several things. One that the licensing exemption for this facility has to be repealed. This facility has to be subjected to outside licensure. There has

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to be a framework for ensuring the quality of care and safety of children in state run facilities and there has to be a transparent framework when sharing information with the public and there has to be a notification requirement that if another agency comes in and says well we're making this finding that care is so deficient here that children are in immediate jeopardy of harm and there has to be a mechanism for notifying not just the public but consumers of that program and their guardians. That framework just did not exist. So, I think it's important that this bill moves forward even though I think it is moving forward by consensus I think it's important that the Office of the Child Advocate put that information on the record for folks to may be part of this committee that may not have that history. This is not an academic discussion. There is a recommendation to ensure adequate oversight and licensure of a state-run facility for vulnerable children is an essential, critical safety recommendation. I would also like to say and echoing the testimony from the Department of Children and Family that we have arrived today on this recommendation today by consensus and that I think it is no small thing. The licensure facility that is run by the state that has operated now for quite years and years, without this regulatory protection I think it's a big and important step forward that we arrived at this by consensus as partners by the Department of Children and Families in less than a year's time is an example of doing what a government can to address urgent problems that children face. And I think it's something we're really happy about at the Office of the Child Advocate. We will continue to work with our partners in DCF because the bill is really just the

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first step and then we have to -- then the regulations have to be adopted and that process has to go forward and so we want to hold ourselves accountable to a timeline that is appropriate to the urgent nature of the issues we're talking about because I really wanted to underscore that.

Another bill I wanted to offer testimony on today is 156. I actually think I offered testimony in my written testimony on a bill that was pulled from public hearing, so I apologize for that. I didn't realize that but Bill 156 which is an Act Concerning the Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education which is a bill that I very strongly support. I know it's a bill that has come up for this committee before and I stated in our testimony, currently Connecticut provides this benefit through youth adopted through DCF foster care and the benefit pays higher education tuition fees, room, and board, at an accredited college/university up to an amount equivalent to the cost that Yukon but it applies to children that were adopted after 2004. The bill would allow the benefit to run to children adopted on or after 2001 provided that the youth meets all the other eligibility requirements. I would stress that this bill is imminently reasonable. It is designed to equitably service the best interest of youth adopted via DCF that will remain college aged at this time and these are youth to whom the state owes an economic and a moral community.

These are children for whom the state was the parent. These children lived in state care. They were removed from their homes and not returned to their biological families because of chronic or persistent or unresolvable deprivation, trauma,

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abuse, and neglect. The state did a good job of finding permanency for these children and it has to offer the same benefit to all of these children that remain college age. It is a moral duty that the state has to the children that it parented and found a disposition for. I think we also owe this to the families who have done this service to the children and to the community and to the state as taking in a child that of course they love and want to help but taking on a journey that is not easy. Right? It's not easy to take a child who has experienced so much trauma into your home and to provide the nurturance, consistency, parenting, teaching, and opportunity. We owe these parents our gratitude and a financial commitment to make sure they can be educated in our state educational institutions. I would also echo that the number of children. Not the [Inaudible-00:50:53] not all children who are college aged are going to college so when we look at the fiscal note which will be attached to this bill when we look at data let's also look at the data through the reasonable lens not just what is probable but what is possible and you know think about you know how we can extend this reasonable, equitable, just morally appropriate benefit to children who most need our protection and support.

Lastly I would just offer a couple of remarks in support of the Bill, the Bill 5201 which is I think is a very reasonable common-sense solution to provide education to parents about the risk of a child being in a hot car. I would say that Connecticut has not had a lot of deaths in this way but again as we talk about child fatality I mean how, there shouldn't be any, right? There shouldn't be any. We know nationally this is an issue right

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and I think one of the things that parents need education about is one of the things we talk about every year when we partner with CCMC and their summer safety press conference is that I don't think that most people know that children are more susceptible to heat stroke in the car. They also don't know how quickly the temperature in the car can change and they don't know that even on a day that doesn't feel hot to you and me the temperature can go from like 75 outside to 110 inside the car very quickly right? These are points of education. No better setting than programs licensed by the Office of Early Child to offer that critical education and empowerment to parents. And lastly I'd like to offer support to Bill 157, the feminine hygiene product bill which I agree. I mean if we -- I think there is support for that concept. I would point out that there are other jurisdictions that have made this benefit possible. I shouldn't say these benefits, these basic health products available in Illinois. New York City started with it. Now it's along all of New York state so every school district is doing it. California has it. It's not a global mandate in California but it is for any school district that serves I think more than 50 percent low income students. Boston was moving towards this as well and so I think it's a really important notion to take up. I think it is part of why certain kids don't come to school and it is part of basic assistance in health care that we provide. We provide the other things people need. This is part of that, so I wanted to offer support for that. That's it for me.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. As always, fantastic testimony. We appreciate your in

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sight. Are there any questions? Yes, Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Thank you so much Madame Chair. Thank you for your testimony. I wanted just to request you; your words are very powerful especially the ones you spoke about 156. If this bill goes through this committee which I'm hoping that it would and then goes to the General Assembly I would request that you actually speak to the Appropriation Committee in the same fashion and the same basic understanding that all of them should have about our responsibility. That would really help us out.

SARAH EAGAN: Of course.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Thank you so much.

SARAH EAGAN: I'd be happy to.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Anyone else? Nope. Thank you very much.

SARAH EAGAN: Thank you very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We're going to have Senator Bergstein followed by Senator Slap. Senator do you have some guests with you.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): I do.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Would they like to come up?

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): They're going to testify on their own if that's okay.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): They're going to testify on their own? Absolutely that's okay. I just wanted to make sure you guys. Okay go ahead please.

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SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you so much Madame Chair, ranking members, and all members of the Children's Committee for allowing me to testify in support of Bill 157. Early last summer, two students Emmy and Charlotte came to me and educated me about the issue of Period Poverty and the fact that whether it's 10 percent or 20 percent, a significant percentage of students of Connecticut are missing school on a regular basis because they simply can't afford these necessary supplies and that's really a tragedy and it's entirely preventable so obviously we all know what happens when somebody misses school on a regular basis and their confidence suffers, their academic performance suffers. It can become a vicious and destructive cycles that has lifelong ramifications so nobody should have to make the choice between going to school and caring for their bodies and this is something that has elegant situation which is also what the students presented to me. I'm just really excited to support this because it's not only an identifiable problem but there's a ready solution and this is a student driven initiative. They are really the ones who are educating us. They are telling us what the reality is in schools. There are some schools that supply period supplies, but they're often located in the nurse's office. I have spoken to some students who told me that yes they're in the nurse's office and they also charge for them in the nurse's office. So, in addition to them having to perhaps walk through multiple hallways trying to cover up one's clothing that is stained and you know worrying about just being subjected to a very humiliating experience when they finally get to the nurse's office they have to pay for this necessary supply. Hopefully we can all agree that

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menstruation is not an illness. It shouldn't be treated like an illness in the nurse's office. It's certainly not an unmentionable condition. It is a normal bodily function that is the basis for all life. So -- so my hope is that with this legislation I thank you so much for raising it in this committee. We can begin to destigmatize menstruation for all menstruators and that we can talk about it openly and honestly and that we can provide the necessary supplies for everybody where they need them which is in the school bathrooms. I wanted to address the representative's question about funding because I agree we shouldn't just have mandates on schools that are already incredibly strapped for resources so what we have done at my suggestion Amy and Charlotte submitted an application for a grant to the Partnership for Connecticut which you know is the new partnership that has been established with lots of funding to address situations, I think exactly like this. Situations in which at risk students are disengaged from school. How and the question is the mission of that partnership is to re-engage students in school. So, this is actually a relatively low cost and very high impact way to re-engage students and significantly decrease absenteeism. And just to give you an idea of the cost and I know it's not the pervy of this committee I was rather surprised to hear that it's not as much I thought it might be. Initial and these are initial estimates that were done for one town that happens to be Greewich that initial estimates were that it would cost -- cost about \$2.50 per student to install a dispenser and these are special dispensers that are designed for schools. The products happen to be all organic and minimal packaging and they dispense one at a time.

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People ask are they you know whatever. So, but if somebody needs the products they can access them. So, \$2.50 per student and we have approximately 158,000 female students in the state of Connecticut between the ages of, well enrolled in 5th through 12th grade. That adds up to \$400,000 dollars for installation and then about \$250,000 dollars per year after that for the supplies so I would hope that the Partnership for Connecticut would seriously consider this again as a low cost high impact solution that is being initiated by students really across the state so Amy and Charlotte have connected with students around the state. There are other students who will be here to testify tomorrow in front of Public Health. Obviously it's not easy for student to get out of school but I am encouraging them to come and make their voices heard because they're really the force behind this. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Here on the Committee on Children we love when students come to testify. I do have a few questions for you, and I don't know if you can answer them but let's try.

SARAH EAGAN: Okay.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are you, is there a statewide number of schools, number of days allowed to be missed that are unexcused absences or is that done on an individual district basis?

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): I do not have the answer, but I think Representative Comey does.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Comey, can you provide that information?

REP. COMEY (102ND): Yes I believe it's 10 days and then --

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REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's sounds exactly right because that's how it is in my child's school and I just didn't know if it was. So, if there are only 10 days of unexcused absence I would imagine there are many more days of menstruation per school year than 10. So, there is an absolute concern that children who don't have access to these products are not coming to school if they don't have that access, so I think that that's a very good point. And you said applied for this grant. Did you have any idea as to when you would receive word on that?

SARAH EAGAN: Well they haven't received one. I did reach out initially to the Dalia philanthropies and pitch this idea months ago because we held a public forum up here in September. They initially declined but they were also in the process of forming that partnership and I think it wasn't until mid-January that they announced that they were opened to receiving you know, office suggestions so that's when I suggested to Amy and Charlotte reach out and submit which is really, again a student led initiative. I think it's really important for a partnership that is focused on students to hear from students. So, they haven't heard back yet. I think it was submitted on January 24.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): It will take time. Sure. Okay great. Thank you.

SARAH EAGAN: Hopefully they are listening to this.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We'll ask them to peruse the tape. Are there any questions? Yes Senator Cohen?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Yes thank you. I'm sorry I walked in during your testimony but thank you for testifying on this and thank you for driving the

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initiative. As a Board of Ed member, a former Board of Ed member in my town there was a logistics issue as well with period products and menstruation products so as we're looking at this language and seeing it unfold one of the issues were, was that there were not dispensers or products being made available in the restrooms. You had to go to the nurse's office. This presents a problem with passing time period and things of that nature, and so students were embarrassed. They were coming to class late. They couldn't get there on time so just something to think about as this all, as the language unfolds and the logistics of where these products will be. Schools are often very large and getting to, if they're just in one destination, i.e. the nurse's office, it could be an issue getting the products so I appreciate this initiative and I see that it would be made available in the restrooms which I think is terrific for the students and doesn't present that same logistical issue that is presented in some of the towns surrounding us so thank you again.

REP. BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you Senator Cohen. Yes, I think that's precisely why this legislation is so important is because the method that has been used to distribute even when they are available is insufficient and it requires students to either suffer in silence or either to submit to a very harrowing and humiliating process of having to walk the halls and maybe wait in line and being treated as though they have an illness in which they don't. And to an earlier question I do think it important that these be available in gender neutral bathrooms as well.

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REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. Any other questions. Yes Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Thank you Madame Chair and thank you Senator Bergstein for your testimony. So, in the bill I feel and I believe it's going to be important to actually have the bill not be dependent on getting financial support from outside from some philanthropy because it goes against the essence of our challenge right now is that we have to look at a charity or organization to try and help take care of a physiologic need of our students. That's messed up. And if this goes for appropriation I want to hear everybody's comments and then look at the prism off there saying that a physiologic need of an individual is going to be up to appropriation because they are going to be treated differently and that's not right. And I think with this bill we are entering the 19th century as I said earlier. It should have happened hundreds of years ago but I'm glad for leadership of the students and yours to bring this forward and move this conversation to the level where when we are going to look at dollars and cents we are going to actually then I will say they will have to cut the budget rolls to half as well because you want to save money on the physiologic needs let's go all the way for everyone and then that's going to be, that's what the conversation is going to be about. If people are going to use dollars and money and the budgets to decide about how to take care of the physiologic needs of our community members and our students.

REP. BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you and I couldn't agree more. It is a basic physiological need and so this really is an opportunity to shift our mindset,

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out collective mindset and to recognize it as such and not an unmentionable.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Wilson Pheanious followed by Representative Kokoruda.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes I want to make it very clear that all of the things that you said about the necessity of this and the fact that we should be in the 20th century and we should be providing this as a free service to everyone is one thing. The issue of putting it on the school boards is another and I have no complaints if we are talking about an additional appropriation for the department, maybe make it the Department of Education's responsibility to supply the schools. My concern is just that I hear again and again about unfunded mandates and the best ideas, the important ideas we have like shifting the way people think about things like this and dealing with the needs of women and especially because this is a student prompted mission I want to give it my full support but I also want to make it clear that we can't just create mandate after mandate that the schools have to absorb without some consideration so I would just ask that as we're working with this legislation as we move forward that we look at building into it. The cost that will cost to run it. If those costs aren't extreme as was indicated by your testimony so much the better. I just ask that it not be an additional unfunded mandate on our school systems. Perhaps there's a way that we could orchestrate and I agree with you that it shouldn't be a matter of charity but at least if we could make it so that school boards had access to these products and to the money that supports them then I have no issue because it isn't a terribly important issue. I

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would ideally the products should be available everywhere and not just in the nurse's office but as long as I'm thinking about how the school boards without assistance from us afford changes that are good changes that's my point.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much.
Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you Madame Chair. First of all thank you Senator for bringing this forward. I mean it's so exciting that it came through students so that's wonderful. And you know most of our good ideas do come from our constituents. Don't you agree? I have to agree with Representative Wilson Pheanious and I agree with Senator here also but if we believe it's a good bill and it sounds like a lot of us do, well then we should support it and I totally agree with you, you know we're quick to say to our boards of Ed we think this is good so you should do it. If we believe in it we need to support it and I congratulate you on at least thinking in that way and also getting the students to look at grants whichever way but we have some school districts that you look at the per pupil expenditure they're just making it and this might not sound like much to them but it is. The different level of per pupil over the expansion of the state is pretty remarkable and I would hate to think that some of our lowest funded schools would really ever have one more burden, so I want to congratulate you on this. I think it's a great idea. I'm surprised no one thought of it sooner. I see it took some smart students from Greenwich to think of it. Thank you.

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SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you and there are other students around the state who are very supportive of this and one thing that's remarkable is how quickly the students created a network of peers to support this and they're not all girls. They're boys too and yeah so highly sensitive to the issue of resources especially to resource strapped schools and districts and so that was the reason why we reached out to the partnership to just try to find any source of funding to maybe initially get this off the ground.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I applaud you for being creative in that regard. I think that in the fiscal climate that we're in when we want to provide something that is necessary to our kids we should look to every possible resource to do that, so I applaud you. Are there any further questions? Oh my co-chair.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Thank you. Thank you for bringing this to us and thank the students that have been involved because I think as Representative Kokoruda said the best ideas come from people who have experienced the problem and understand it best. I am so proud that they're engaged. You know I live in one of the poorest cities in Connecticut in Bridgeport and I'm not going to share my own experience but I have been when I was in high school with a problem like this and as I was sitting here my mind moved back to when I was in high school and I was like this seems so common that I just didn't experience but other kids had and they just didn't want to talk about it and at that time the nurse didn't even provide anything for you right. Nobody even talked about it, so I think it's really important that we start thinking differently. I

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just left human services for a hearing and I just think many of things we have done in the past were about the early 1900s as I think the Senator has mentioned and we've got to come and start to address what our children are going through now, you know and when I think about kids in Bridgeport this would be a huge problem for them not to have and it probably is a problem right now right? The disadvantaged few that it could make a huge difference to them, but I also know that our budget and the ECS formula is a problem there and they don't have the funding. I think it has to be a combination of going out for dollars although I think we have a responsibility to our children to supply these as a state. I think we've got to be really creative on how we do that where people can go out and get funding from an organization or philanthropy and work on that and then perhaps some of those change end up coming from the state and I think we really need to address it. And you know money is always a big concern but as my co-chair always says we're thinking about the children first and the money second. But when I think about this there's a way of getting this done by looking at both philanthropy and the state to get this done and It thank you for this common sense approach and I thank you for bringing the youth here and championing it on their behalf. Thank you.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you Senator Moore.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Any further questions? Hearing none thank you very much Senator. We appreciate your time. We have Senator Slap and then we will be going to the public directly after Senator Slap. Welcome Senator to your old committee.

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SENATOR SLAP (5TH): Thank you. I miss you all terribly.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): The feeling is mutual.

SENATOR SLAP (5TH): So, thank you Representative Linehan, Senator Moore, Representative Green and all the members of the Children's Committee thanks for having me here and I'll be brief. I'm really here to echo the comment of Senator Bergstein. I really applaud her leadership on this issue. And even more than that I applaud the leadership on students from Greenwich and from students who came from all across the state to mobilize on this issue that I think is really about dignity and it's about equity and equality. I think it's so critically that the voices who are speaking in favor of this are not just female voices as well, that there are men who come forward and say you know what this is an important issue. I remember sitting in this very room a few months ago with some of you and Senator Bergstein put together a forum and we heard from the students about all the innovative ways that the districts and other communities are dealing with this issue and it really inspired me. You know a few years ago we passed a landmark pay equity legislation and it wasn't just a women's issue and I see this is in kind of a similar way in that it's really critical that we all come together. We don't say you know what that's just a female issue and we're not going to get involved. I mean it's not because I'm a father of two daughters either you know you know I don't think that's a necessity as well to be to care about this issue. There are thousands of young women in this state that are impacted by this every single day. They either miss school or they miss class or they have an incredible

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amount of stress around this where I believe they shouldn't and I do believe if boys menstruated we would not be having this conversation and we sure wouldn't be talking about how to pay for it. It would be very clear that this was a cost of doing business so to speak to have a public school and to have people attend there all day just like toilet paper. It's just a common thing that we provide for students and staff so I believe we should approach it that way and again I'm really here just to echo comments of so many great advocates starting with the students. Congratulations on this and I'm with you every step of the way. With that I will, you know you have my testimony with some more statistics and figures that you've probably already heard, and I'll leave it at that and again thank you for your time.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you Senator and I can say on behalf of women everywhere thank you. It's nice to have the men stand up with us and we appreciate that. Are there any questions for the senator? No? Hearing none thank you very much. We appreciate you being here today.

SENATOR SLAP (5TH): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And we will be moving on to the public. I just want to remind everyone that we do have a three-minute limit so while you are testifying please be cognizant. There may be a buzzer that goes off. When that buzzer does go off we just ask that you summarize your testimony and then we'll get to asking any questions. So, with that we have, and I apologize for the name. I hope I am getting it right. Natalie Ochoa and Casey Van. Did I get that right? Ochoa. There you go I want

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to say it appropriately. Natalie Ochoa. Thank you so much for being here. Okay great you got that. Okay go ahead.

CASEY VAN: Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Linehan, and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Casey Van and I'm a member of the Mayor's Youth Leadership Council at Stanford High School. Today I'm joined by Natalie Ochoa. She's a member of the Center for Youth Leadership at Bryan McMahan High School in Norwalk. On behalf of our 200 student activist members, we are proud to testify in solidarity with our peers of Senate Bill 157. Since 2017 our work has focused on normalizing conversations about period or menstrual equity. We try our best to make the case that menstruation falls squarely at the intersection of economic health and education policy. Our outreach efforts call on every state legislature to eliminate the tampons tags which Connecticut did in 2018 and we trumpet to fact that our school provides tampons and pads free to female bodied students. Every month on Tampon Tuesday we hand out tampons and pads with an information sheet. The handout addresses the stigma that way too many people associate with periods. The importance of menstrual and vaginal healthcare in everyday health in female bodied students and passing a wide net of including boys and men in the period movement. We also call to attention that the educational equity aspect of periods that limiting access to tampons and pads in schools result in too many female bodied students missing too much class time. That's what Senate Bill 157 addresses, increased access. Yes, period products are available in our nurse's office but that should be just one of several access points in the schools for

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female bodied students to get tampons and pads. It's common sense or "no brainer" according to Senator Derek Slap of West Hartford.

NATALIE OCHOA: We believe it is time to free the tampon from the stigma that periods are a medical issue. To free the tampon from adult supervision and allow teens to manage their own bodies and to free the tampons to female body students with easier access to products can be fully engaged in classroom learning. Given that Senate Bill 157 is proposed as an unfunded mandate, how much will it cost school districts to place tampons and pads in dispensers in girls' and gender-neutral bathrooms. One school district in up state New York spent \$8,800 dollars on 24 dispenses while neighboring districts spent \$3,700 in 12 dispensers. Closer to home, our public schools estimates the first-year cost would total \$16,500 dollars with \$10,000 dollars spent on dispensers for 50 middle school and high school bathrooms. \$5,000 dollars earmarked for pads and tampons and \$1,500 dollars for the upkeep of the dispensers. The annual costs thereafter is estimated at \$6,500 dollars for tampons, pads, and the maintenance of the dispensers. This is from an annual operating budget of \$200 million dollars. Yes, we are basing this on the purchase of dispensers each of which would have a 10 or 15 second delay between each tampon release. We've tried other less secure -- Senator, may I continue? Thank you. -- methods of distribution, baskets on tables in bathrooms for example but they prove problematic in terms of upkeep. We encourage our fellow advocates that work with the companies that purchase soap, hand sanitizer, and toilet paper for your school districts. We are sure you can

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negotiate discounted rates for dispensers and period products. Why should taxpayers pay for the period products and dispensers? Many advocates from teen activist elected officials pointed tampons and pads as necessities so much as soap and toilet paper in bathrooms. "These are not products that girls can simply choose not to use like perfume or cosmetics" said one advocate. Finally we ask you to remember that girls have bodies and they bring them to school. Let's make it a little bit fairer to learn with dignity. Thank you for letting us testify.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Well, you did a terrific job. We, here on the Committee on Children absolutely love it when young people come to testify. It's even better when young people come to advocate for a bill that they're helping to write. So, thank you so very much and I believe that your testimony has given more factual information than anyone else's regarding this bill so I greatly appreciate that. I do have a few questions for you. The first is that there has been a lot of discussion as you can hear about the cost associated with this and I thank you for those facts and figures because the cost associated is much less than we assumed that it would be however, because money is always discussed in this building we have some questions for you as to what you think would be acceptable. Now, I come from a district that where the children are more middle class and are probably able to afford these things more so than someone a lower income individual as represented by Senator Moore so the question then becomes if money is an issue and how or if we are able to actually pass this bill would your student led organization be amendable to having

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this be provided in districts which have 50 percent or more low income individuals.

NATALIE OCHOA: I'm sorry so the question is? Could you repeat?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): To cut the overall cost would you support this bill being rewritten so that we would be providing these materials for the first step in districts that have 50 percent or more low-income individuals.

NATALIE OCHOA: I think that we would -- I mean yeah I would support that. Any way we could get those products in their schools as soon as possible I would support, and our organization would.

CASEY VAN: Speaking from experience, our school district does have a 50 percent more of students that are in the low-income area and this is just really a necessity. It's something that is needed. It's not just a simple thing as makeup. It's something equally as representative as soap and toilet paper.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I agree. Unfortunately sometimes in this building we do have to make compromises solely based on the cost of a program as much as we love and agree with it so we just wanted to take your temperature on if it ultimately came down to us being able to pass this bill and we needed to make those concessions if you would support it. Of course we fight for what we can fight for. We'll try not to do that, but we just wanted to get your thought on that. Additionally there was something in your testimony that really struck a chord with me and it's that you actually go in your high schools and you talk to girls and boys

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about freeing the tampon and about menstruation. Let me explain why I think what you are doing is so much more than Period Equity. When we as girls and women discuss our bodies in a way that we are proud of our bodies and we have an open conversation about exactly what our bodies do and what we have I believe that comfort will also result in us being able to speak up if somebody crosses a line. If somebody is more comfortable talking about their body, they're more comfortable with telling someone no when someone crosses the line. They're more comfortable speaking up if someone is abusing them. The more we talk about our bodies the more we can actually stop abuse from happening so I want you to know that I applaud you for what you're doing, not just on that level that you might see it. I think what you're doing has far reaching implications on how we as girls and women see ourselves, value ourselves, and are willing to talk about those parts of our bodies that are stigmatized often so I thank you and I hope that you continue to do that and especially now that you know how I see that maybe that might help enhance your message as well. Are there any other questions? Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you Madame Chair and thank you girls. I just want to echo the chairwoman's comments. It's wonderful to see you here testifying and I'm sorry I missed your testimony before ladies but, I just applaud you for taking the time and making the effort. This is obviously something that's important to you and as a result of that it's important to me as well. I want you to know that as a legislator. I mentioned before that prior to being a legislator I was on my local Board of Education and there were several

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girls involved with this project. It's probably going back four years ago or so and what I found to be the case is a lack of awareness right so these girls were speaking to administration and administration had no idea that weren't dispensers in the restrooms right so we had a fairly new high school that was built and they talked about the distance to travel to the nurse's office and how this was really a problem and very embarrassing and all the things that you so aptly iterated in your testimony. Do you think since you've been involved with this project and I recognize that there are certainly some low income districts that are impacted for other reasons and as the good chairwoman stated that perhaps we could make a first step effort in this bill by you know qualifying district status in terms of income. But do you think that there's an awareness issue as well that goes along with this and that perhaps districts with the right incentives towards awareness could be made more aware of the issue and perhaps do it on their own dime because they just simply didn't realize that this was an issue. What are your thoughts on that?

NATALIE OCHOA: Yeah so I think that the idea that the nurse's office just being the only center for where girls can have can go and get tampons and pads is really outdated. Like we said, having to go to the nurse's office it loses time. Even if they don't have pads or tampons in their nurse's office they probably won't be able to go to school. So I think that, wait what was the question again.

REP. COHEN (12TH): I'm just wondering to the extent that you think this is an awareness issue in certain districts and if there's something that we can do

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and financially incentivizing certain districts, perhaps lower income districts if there is just something we could legislatively that would increase awareness and thereby these districts just may put these dispensers in their schools because they were simply unaware before. Do you find that there's an awareness issue with this problem?

NATALIE OCHOA: So, yes just the idea that we're still, well just the fact that we're still debating this issue that the nurse's office could be still the main center for these tampons and pads is just crazy and I think that that signals that we do need to talk about that more and there is a problem with awareness. Similarly we are still talking about this. New stories keep coming up when we discuss this at our school, so I do think that do still need to be talking about this more and more and yeah do you have anything to say?

CASEY VAN: Yes, as you know we are part of activism groups and just even spreading awareness about these issues is such and it's an immaculate change and it really improves what we can do here in society. Today we still even to be honest we do get backlash. We do get different views on these and we think it's important to integrate student activism, integrate the youth into these issues to spread awareness which is very important.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I just want to thank the chairwoman for her indulgence and for you Madame Chair. I would venture to say that a lot of administrators unfortunately in this day and age are still male and so there is that sort of lack of awareness. Like even though this is a regular bodily function of you know obviously a very large

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percentage of human population there's just sort of an oversight I think to the extent that you all have been making people aware I thank you and to the extent that we legislatively help bring awareness to the issue I think we're all the better for it so thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I'd like to give you a real time update. I have a young man from my district in Cheshire who is watching this right now on CTN and so I'm hoping that after you leave here you can email me parts of your project and I'd like to share that with him and see in Cheshire if we can talk to our superintendent about this. I find that really interesting that you -- that you have this. And he's texting me right now. Dan I see you.

[Laughter] Also I wanted to thank the Senator for that really great idea. I did kind of slap you and say I love it, but I think that if we process out of committee it should have some information on how to alert districts that may not be included because of the fiscal note. Given that the cost is so low there may be room in some people's budget to do this and I want you to know that you'll have done that and so I'd be happy to work together if the good Senator would like to work with us on that. Anyone here in our committee if you would like to provide information to your school districts regarding this we can do that as well, so we'll get that information out. Are there anymore questions?
Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): So, thank you for your advocacy. This weekend I did a decathlon academic with students from all over Connecticut and I am really proud of the work that comes out of debate and comes out of young people willing to participate

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in making things better for all the members of our community so I really appreciate you today and the work that you've done on this. As you were talking and I was listening to the comments regarding the cost of it I said to my cochair, perhaps we need to be thinking about as we build new high schools and higher elementary that it's part of the building expense to put in the dispensers so see the work that you do and how it can trigger how something looks for the future so I really do appreciate you being here today.

CASEY VAN: Thank you.

NATALIE OCHOA: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Wilson Pheanious.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): No so much a question as a comment. Again thank you for your advocacy and for all the young women and men who are coming forth to talk to people. It is important to raise awareness and to normalize the experience of women across populations. But, I wanted to add one thing as we talk about the potential of compromising to only look at low income environments often in an affluent environment you have low income people and I would want us to inadvertently do anything that further stigmatizes people who already may not have the same level of wealth than others in a community so we just need to be sensitive because you -- we're trying to make things sit and fix it for one group we don't want to stigmatize or disadvantage another. The other comment I would make was when I talked about the nurse's office I wasn't so much thinking about the medical model and you reminded me that's what that does. My point was more that maybe

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there were other centralized places. I don't care if it's the cafeteria restroom, the gymnasium restroom that there might be other places that you could provide products without hitting every single bathroom in the facility so that was simply to clarify that point.

CASEY VAN: May I comment? Representative so we will definitely work with our student body and student leaders in order to integrate this into school budgets, so I understand the financial aspect of that. And definitely offering great aspect points for female bodied students that are comfortable and safe for students to realize and that these access points offer a better environment. In regard to finance there are many opportunities like fundraising, collaborating with other schools, and really working out the budget with our student leaders and our administrators as well.

NATALIE OCHOA: I would just to emphasize the importance of having multiple points of access. I mean if you went into my school, Brien McMahan you would just get lost. I mean it's so big. I remember as a freshman I was lost because there was just so many hallways. It's just the space is humungous. The space between the bathrooms is huge. It takes probably five minutes if I'm speed walking to get from one side to the other, so I do want to emphasize the importance of having multiple points of access for these products.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excellent. Representative Comey.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Hi thank you so much. Thank you for coming out and being so passionate about this important subject. While we're talking about the

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number of bathrooms, do you in your school you're saying it's big and you have access to multiple bathrooms in your school because I have heard that some bathrooms, some schools only have one, maybe two bathrooms open because of things, because of vaping locking down the bathrooms. This is happening in my district so I'm just curious why we're talking about the numbers of bathrooms and I have you sitting here answering questions. I'm curious as to how many bathrooms are actually open in your school.

NATALIE OCHOA: Let me count. It's a lot. The bathroom, yeah the bathroom is near the music hallway, science, CGS.

SENATOR COMEY (102ND): I guess the question would be they're open? They're not closing any.

NATALIE OCHOA: They're all open. There's only certain times during the day that they would be closed which is like every, like once a week during House because they prefer to be in house rather than, or like homeroom instead of like in the bathrooms or the classes and after school but that's really it.

CASEY VAN: Similar to our school at Stanford High we do sometimes have some bathrooms that are closed off due to these issues but it's important that since we have these other bathrooms there are also, it's another access point rather than just going to the nurse's office as one source.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Right I guess that was my point. If you only have them in one location and that location is not available so that's why it's

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important to have them in multiple locations. Thank you very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Any other questions? Okay one last thing. Here at the Committee on Children we like to recognize the effort that kids make to come here and testify so on behalf of my Co-Chair Senator Moore and the rest of the committee members we have some pins we'd like to present to you for coming here today so I'll meet you around there okay. Thank you so much.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): The next person is Ivy Farinella.

IVY FARINELLA: Good afternoon to all of you on the Children's Committee. I appreciate being here and testifying on Bill 156. I'm not going to read. I just had eye surgery so I can't see this really well, but I am an adoptive parent. I adopted my daughter at the end of 2004. I think this is my third or fourth time coming to see if we can get some equity here for kids that and I think one of the important things to realize is that the fiscal, well last year when this was presented the fiscal papers were counting all the children that were adopted in those years and that's really not realistic and many -- the statistics of foster and adopted children for graduating and completing college are very dismal. They really unfortunately are very low, and I think that that really is because of abuse and neglect. If you look at the ACES study which is Adverse Childhood Experiences, kids that are in the system carry enormous burdens from their abuse and neglect and this can affect them for their whole life. Those children that are in college and are succeeding from that time period

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I really think that they deserve to be supported. And also looking at the fiscal end of it a lot of these kids are probably getting some federal student aid, so it isn't even the entire cost. And my daughter would have been here today except she's taking an exam. She's a sophomore at Yukon. She's doing well but she really has struggled, and I've been doing foster care for 19 years and these kids really come in with massive burdens. One of my foster kids just left to go live at college now. She's 22 and you know I think that originally when I started out doing this I didn't really understand how burdensome some of these experiences are for these kids. So, I mean student debt, I mean probably everybody has got some student debt. I would like to see this so freed up for these kids that also have much they're carrying around a lot of baggage so if we could do this and I really think that it isn't going to be as costly as projected by DCF. I don't think so.

REP. LINEHAN (102ND): Right. Thank you very much for your testimony. I will say that we have tried to pass this quite a few times. You're right about that and it's nice to see you again. [Laughter] I think Senator Kelly last time, he's not here unfortunately. He did bring up that idea that you could put into statute that it would be the cost associated after all financial aid is give and I thought that was a very interesting solution because I do know that the fiscal note was calculated on the entire cost of college and so I wished he was still here and I'm sure we will be talking about this. I think that it's a really good point and so what we'll do my co-chair and I will talk about that and see if that's something that we want to put in some

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substitute language and see if that affects the fiscal note because I think that it was really just a brilliant idea that never got off the ground last year because it came to us kind of late in the game but there is, that's how it was done through the higher education committee for a free community college, right it's a debt free community college. It's not working to pay for everything. That's a really important note and now we have some data to show what that would be, so we appreciate that and we're absolutely going to talk about that so thank you.

IVY FARINELLA: And a lot of these kids have work study too. They get some grants and then my daughter works 20 hours a week.

REP. LINEHAN (102ND): So it would be, absolutely so it would be after any financial aid or grants. We would find the correct language to use that. Okay so great. Thank you so very much. Are there any questions? Senator Anwar and then followed by Senator Kokoruda.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much Madame Chair. Again Ivy thank you for being here and thank you for your advocacy. I am fortunate to be your friend and have had the opportunity to visit you at home and I know your daughter and other children and daughters who you've had as your foster children and you have been a lifesaver for many children. The state has not fulfilled our responsibility and I know you're struggling right now, and I know I'm not mentioning her name in there so that's why I'm not going to mention her name. Your daughter is also struggling with her challenges. And then its -- this is a situation where her struggles are created because of

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the financial challenges and her capacity to get educated. This is a young, African American girl who is proud of who she is. She's working hard. She can achieve all the successes but the financial constraints because of a policy have stopped her from being able to achieve her goals. And I wished the we as state had the wisdom to not draw a line and separate children who would get opportunities and the ones who would not. And this is real pain that I have sensed in every time I have visited you and have talked to you about. We're going to hopefully with your testimony and your work with the wisdom of this committee move forward but hoping that you would come up with a better solution.

IVY FAINELLA: Yes, well thank you so much. It's an opportunity to do the next right thing.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Yes. Thank you.

IVY FARINELLA: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. Also just to add to what you said Representative Linehan. And with the free college what has taken off of that is the PELL Grant, Roberta Willis Ann Institution rate and then you look at the free. I'm sorry I missed so much of the beginning of the public hearing. I had a probst all day today but I just was curious. When we say in this bill, by expanding eligibility criteria are they prevented from applying from financial aid now. What is doing -- what is exactly doing that? I missed that part.

IVY FARIELLA: So, the law that was passed I'm sorry I don't know the year had a window for certain individuals. And so this is expanding the times

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they were adopted so it just excluded people by the very nature of the date.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): How old they were or when they were adopted?

?: No, no the year they were actually adopted.

IVY FARINELLA: It was January 2005 that this subsidy was passed so anyone and last year Dr. Petit introduced the bill to cover kids from 03 and 04 so but even at that it's not because yes many get programs and get you know it's not a huge amount of money but it would make a huge difference for some of us. I'm an older parent. I'm a single parent and it's been tough so.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any other questions? Representative Wilson Pheanious.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Not so much a question as a comment. I wanted to thank you for being a foster parent and for the lifelong dedication that I know goes into that. Into that work. The very fact that you're here that you come back here year after year advocating on behalf of your children that one time maybe somebody else's. I just want to take the opportunity to say thank you because I know that they have a lot and it's so important to the state.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. Thank you very much. Appreciate your time. Lucy Nolan please. That will be followed by Christopher Scott.

LUCY NOLAN: Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Linehan, members of the Committee on Children. My name is Lucy Nolan. I'm the director of Policy and Public Relations at the Connecticut

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Alliance to End Sexual Violence. Our mission is to create communities free of sexual violence and provide culturally affirming trauma informed advocacy prevention and intervention services centered on the voices of survivors. I'm here today to speak on Raised Bill 5199, an act concerning probation periods following conviction of certain crimes against minors. We are supportive of the legislation but as a part of 53A-73A Sexual Assault in the 4th degree be removed from the requirement of no less than 10 years and no more than 35 years mandatory probation. We generally agree that longer probation periods for sex offenders they are more likely to recidivate after a longer period of time and we must be careful to monitor high risk offenders as the risk of danger is significant. Specifically the alliance requests that Section A1-AB of the, which is in my testimony of the Connecticut statute to be exempted which includes sexual contact with a person who is under 13 and the actor is more than two years older or the person is 13 to 15. We're concerned about young people who would be subject to mandatory 10-year probation. Say a 14-year-old who molested a 12-year-old. While we know that there are those in their late teens who groom younger people we want them to be supported through supervision rather than mandatory probation of 10-35 years. If the court believes it's in the best interest of the victim and the community it could exercise that right rather than committing all offenders regardless of their age to mandatory sentence.

We whole heartedly agree that the other section should remain in the legislation. Those include those who sexually abused, be those who are

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physically helpless, a guardian of someone less than 18, an actor who has supervisory or disciplinary authority over the victim, sexual contact without consent, doctors or psychotherapist of the victims, school employee, teacher, or coach at the victim's school or someone who is 20 years older and is in the position of power, authority, or supervision in their professional, legal, occupational, or volunteer status. The program or the program activity of the victim under age 18. The alliance supports their ongoing supervision through the probation and parole. They would be under the supervised, specialized sex offenders, and special parole units where sex offenders not only work with parole officers trained to work with sexual offenders but also with the alliances post-conviction victim's services advocate who are linked with the victim to ensure that their needs are met. We search the desk that young sex offenders have a greater chance of not offending again if they get the proper therapies than adult offenders. Therefore, we recommend prioritizing the treatment and support through their formative years unless the court determines there's a need for more. More court supervision. And so the alliance is supportive of the addition of the other statutes regarding commercial sex abuse of minors, misrepresentation of the actor's age to entice a minor and an actor's knowingly promote a minor for monetary compensation of obscene performance. And I just wanted to add two things that, one that according to the FBI a serial child predator will abuse an average, this is an average of 100 times in their lifetime so I think that that's why it's important to maintain we have some probation. And I'm also very happy that Representative Linehan to

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hear you speak about Connecticut's probation because we're a part of it and it's one of the reasons that I believe and we believe that it and so there's the sex offender unit but we are doing a good job with Connecticut. Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. If we could back up for a second. In your testimony and I apologize that I haven't had a chance to read through this before you sat down. I completely agree with you. That was an oversight. We will take out that language which I think that that's important, but I want to talk to you about you were talking about prioritizing helping the victim. I absolutely agree with that. Can you give me some background on how the state does that now and how we may be able to put that into legislation like this?

LUCY NOLAN: Well so what we do with the post-conviction advocates is that we have in the 18 parole offices that we work with the sex offender unit so we are the connection with the victim so we make sure that the victim has a voice in where the offender might live, where they make sure that the offender isn't going to be going somewhere that they might so if they had a problem with young boys they wouldn't be going to a gym let's say, that kind of thing. If so they have to go through treatment and often sometimes the victims are part of that if they want to be. A lot of times the victims don't want to have anything to do with the offender again so it's really just making sure that their voice is heard because when they're sexually assaulted they lose their voice right? They lose their power. That's what it's all about and so what we really try to do is help them get that power back by being their advocates.

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REP. LINEHAN (103RD): So, how would I do that legislatively? Are we walking a bigger budget? Are we talking about actually codifying something that you currently do and putting it in the legislation? I mean I want to do this. I just need direction how.

LUCY NOLAN: Well, I'm going to have to get back to you on that and talk to the people there, but we have a very good program if we've been doing it for a while. It think that's always more room for more funding for a program like that and so but let me get back to that team and then I can get you something.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's great. I appreciate that and if you wouldn't mind sitting down for a meeting with us as soon as possible. We'd really appreciate that. The committee is under some deadlines. I think your input is absolutely invaluable and I would love to start this ASAP.

LUCY NOLAN: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Are there any questions from the committee? Hearing none, thank you so much. Christopher Scott please followed by Stephanie Cooper. [Side conversation]

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: My name is Christopher Scott. I'm here to speak on Senate Bill 156 and this is Stephanie Cooper beside me. She will be following testimony, but we'd figure we would come up together.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excellent okay thank you.

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: Awesome. So I will begin. So I'm currently the program director for the SUN

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Scholars organization which is supported by the United States Adoption caucus and I am the SUN fellow for the Commissioner of Children, Women, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity under Steve Hernandez. Additionally I was the founder of the former Care Scholars program at Central before it became more established as SUN Scholars as a non-profit. And in the summer of 2019 I worked for Senator Amy Klobuchar and presented a federal policy report regarding post-secondary funding for youth adopted out of foster care to United States Congress and the White House. Aside from my full-time role I'm pursuing a master's degree at Harvard and probably most pertinent to this conversation I am a former foster youth having spent 8 years in the system. So, I entered foster care after my dad was deported when I was a year old and my mother who raised me prior to entering the system unfortunately lost a battle drug addiction. So, fast forward a bit to college you know due to these adverse childhood experiences to the struggles that kind of culminate into the high school experience I was enduring I was not excepted into any universities when I first applied and so I began my college career at community college and received my associate's and transferred to Central Connecticut State where I graduated with honors and moved on to becoming a teacher and AmeriCorps member. And so I share this with you because this scenario is statistically improbable. Right? Like only 67 percent of my community of former foster and adopted youth graduate from high school by the age of 18. That's a national statistic by the Apgar's report and only three percent of us will graduate college. Three percent. So, in my professional role I work closely with about 50 youth who are former foster

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and adopted youth so both kind of factions of that population. And one of the means that this is possible that I exist right now is because of this government subsidy that I'm a beneficiary of. And so I go above and beyond for my students. I drive them to school. I help cover them textbooks. I've treaded long outside the traditional 9-5 hours when I'm working with my youth. And why I'm sharing with this is because the alternative to college for my community is disparate. 15 to 20 percent of those who experience foster care by the age of 21 will either be incarcerated or will experience homelessness, myself included with the homelessness. So, by opening the door to more foster and adopt youth to attend college you're directly combating to the sociological conditions these students are facing and directly correlates to unfound upper mobility. Every day I work with students who are ineligible for these funds because they were adopted before the 2005 deadline and while there's private donors that they can connect with, while there's public grants and whatnot and just educational training vouchers it's just not enough. More needs to be done and I'm one person. I have a student right now I'll share a story. He doesn't currently have these funds. Every day I pick him up and drive him up and drive him to Capital Community College because his adoption is off. He's homeless. I bring him to a food bank after school every single day because I want to see this dude succeed. He would be a direct beneficiary if this had been extended. And I just want to say this real quick. I was listening before and Senator Anwar I entirely agree with you. I think it's fundamental that we acknowledge the dynamics of appropriations with this and I spoke last year as a Plainville resident to

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the House Bill 5682 and the reality is of those who graduate high school only 30 percent are going to enroll in college and that's at the national level so when we talk about the financial cost, it just can't be implicated by the whole population. We have to look at it as a whole realistic prorated cost scenario. Regardless of the legislative you make would just change lives and I feel like you can't really put a price tag on that. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you so very much for your testimony. I am thrilled to hear your story. It's absolutely fantastic and I do hope that in the coming years we have more foster youth that have come forward to tell stories just like yours where they're graduating college and doing really great things for others and paying it forward so thank you for being you. Are there any questions?
Representative Kokoruda followed by Senator Anwar.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you very much Christopher. I read your testimony earlier and it's pretty amazing. I have to ask you something first when you don't have the answer. You're going to give me one word. How did you make it? How did you make it here?

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: One word? Resilience.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Resilience. Hopefully you got some help along the way. It's amazing what you've done.

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: Thank you. No it was very between resilience and love. I think you know for me my adoption unfortunately can't speak for every adoption on this but it did dissolve and it didn't work out in the way that I think the state had

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intended it to and for me that's okay because I was raised by the village. It takes a village to raise a kid and I had really incredible incredible mentors in the Plainville community that took me under their wing and later as I went to college people took me under their wing. Carlos Soler is one of the admissions directors changed my life. I mean right now I mean I'm here because in a capacity because Steve has really put his weight behind us as we want to make foster and adoption call because we want to change this world. Just like Representative Linehan said I don't want to be the only person here. I want more students. More people that come from this community to have the opportunity to build their voice because that's what this is about but yeah a lot of love a lot of people that took me under their wing.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you for that. Just a couple questions. One was in your testimony you said I was denied to all state schools. Was it just that you applied, and you didn't get in?

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: Oh yeah 100 percent. So, I'll make this with a sense of brevity but when I was a student in high school I was really struggling academically because of you know the experiences. The reality is when you transfer schools and when you struggle with adverse experiences, when you're struggling with homelessness. I'll be up front. I was sleeping on a porch for middle school. I wasn't caring about my grades and so I was 160 out of 180 kids in my high school class and what's so important and of course I was unexcepted into CCSU and you know something special when I went to work there later on and as I was building care and I saw him and I remember Carlos pulled up my application and

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there's a big rejected sign on it because I did go transfer later and he was like it's not where you start, it's where you finish. The reality is I was very much a product of conditions of society in that moment. I was a product of homelessness, of dealing with the weight of you know formerly mentioned of you know you carry some trauma. You carry some weight. I've seen things I hope no one has to live through in my very early childhood. You know we have a full adult's life full of experiences by the time we're 14 or 15. I'm proud to say now that I'm a professional. I have a 4.0 at Harvard and it's not because I'm born gifted. It's because people loved me, and they cared about me and they lifted me up. That's not an exception to the rule. It's what can happen when things go right in the right places. That's why it's so important that we do things to create more opportunities of equity for these people who are going through these communities. To capitalize on that resilience.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well, thank you for that. Just one final question. You were able to be the beneficiary of this subsidy that we're talking about.

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: I was. Yes.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): But were you also able to apply for other financial aid as a Connecticut student?

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: Yeah that's actually an incredible point. So, as it currently stands the way that it is administered by the Department of Children and Families, so Paul Gresley is the social worker who oversees all adoption forms. Wendy Jackson oversees those post-secondary educational

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funds for those who age out of foster care. I work with them collaboratively now. A really important note on this is that to receive that fund when you submit the application you must have applied for a FASFA. You must have submitted the financial aid form and because of the McKinney Vento Act and because of other state regulations or federal regulations almost always those who are adopted out of foster care receive a full PELL Grant all through college so even though yes it's you know the actual price tag of this is all right here's the cost Yukon Central room and board. It's about 24,000. The reality is that the actually cost to state would have had paid for was significantly less because I had a full PELL. I had institutional aid because I had honors. At community college I was basically free because the PELL just like neutralizes the cost of a community college for the most part so other than textbooks I mean when you really look at the appropriations of this it's so, there's so many intersections of numbers that it's really hard to grab a full picture. I would be confident in arguing that it's much less than the amount that is price tagged on it that would be cost to extend this.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well we're told it will be \$4 million just going forward.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any -- oh Senator Anwar sorry.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you Madame Chair. Christopher, wow! Just wow. I don't have enough words. All I'm going to say is your three minutes will make me strive to be a better person and we have to talk. I have to hug you, but we have to work together about the housing situation because

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you have a role there as well. I think your strength is not only in your capacity that you have come and recognized the bots that have allowed you to be there but also looking back on being sure that others have that same opportunity. We are working on the housing end for a number of these opportunities that we can provide, and they are a lot of stereotypes that we have to fight on that end as well so thank you, thank you and thank you.

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT: Thank you. I really appreciate the kind words.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Any other questions? Hearing none but we also have Stephanie who hasn't given any testimony yet. I know that you are next on the list. Is there something that you wanted to add to Christopher's testimony?

STEPHANIE COOPER: For the time being no. I will just go to my testimony. Thanks. Good Afternoon. My name is Stephanie Cooper. I'm speaking on Bill 156. I'm an intern at the Commission of Women, Children, Senior Equity Opportunity. I'm also a fellow at SUN Scholars. I'm also helping Chris. I'm part of the team to support the adoption caucus for Connecticut. So, when I was 10 years old my mom died of stage 4 breast cancer which led to my placement in my aunt's household. By age 11, my aunt became my legal guardian, so I had a transfer of guardianship. Now I'm 19. I'm a sophomore in college and struggling to pay \$20,000 dollars a year to attend college. Going through foster care since I was really young even before my mother passed away I had been in foster care with my four other sisters multiple times this has led to very high number of adverse childhood experiences. Statistically it

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shows that most foster care youth have four or more adverse childhood experiences which shows a direct correlation to a higher health and social problems. Personally I score an 8 out of 10 on the ACE test. College and education plus mentoring are all examples of protective factors. These protective factors help combat the negative affects of ACE so any adverse childhood experiences that may have occurred during foster care. Although this bill is fundamentally helpful to our community and will assist many students it's lacking necessary means to attending college. Additionally I believe that we should actually allow the bill to go further with implementation of the Family First legislation. So the goal of Family First is to allow or to avoid adoption through foster care and lead to kinship care which is what I have. With Family First the population of students that are currently receiving funding for college will decrease and eventually hopefully disappear collectively so that allows all the money that is being pushed towards people who are adopted through care right now it will push all that money towards children being put into kinship care which is the purpose of family first. So children with that experience in kinship care and go through kinship care are experiencing adverse childhood experiences as children who are being adopted through foster care so they're experiencing the same thing which should be the reason we are passing this bill to allow people who are adopted through foster care and kinship care to receive this college funding in order to attend college. Thank you for your time.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. You did a really great job. Thank you very very much. I am so happy

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you're here. To the both of you. I am so happy, and I hope that you continue to work. It is really wonderful that you are interning with Mr. Hernandez. That's pretty incredible. That's a great gig I have to say so good for you. I just have a question. I'm not sure I understood. So, you talk about Family First. There's a lot of funding there. Are you suggesting that this should be funded by the money coming in from the Family First Act, the federal dollars or are you just saying that it all kind of works together?

STEPHANIE COOPER: I was thinking more that it works together so the purpose of the Family First is to avoid all possible adoption through care and push the children towards more being put into family member's households so the currently population that college funding is going towards is hoping to be decreased with this legislation so hopefully that money can be pushed towards people who are being put into kinship care.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yeah that's fantastic. You know the Department of Children and Families have really stressed to this committee over the past year how important it is and their main directive is to keep kids in kinship care whenever possible and we've been seeing that and this committee now sees the work that is being done by the Department of Children and Families for that purpose and I applaud them so I'm glad to hear that you agree with that and I'm glad to see that you were the beneficiary of kinship care as well so I'm happy to hear that. Are there any questions from our committee? Well, look at that. She did so well. We don't even have any questions. That's good. [Laughter] Excellent. You've done great. Thank you so much for being here.

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Continue to upward trajectory. Really proud to have you here.

STEPHANIE COOPER: Thank you very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. We have Charlotte Hallisey and Amy Barratt. Welcome. Please introduce yourself into the microphone.

CHAROLETTE HALLISEY: Good Afternoon. We are here to testify in support of Bill 157. My name is Charlotte Hallisey and my name is Amy Barratt. We are high school students spearheading legislation addressing a critical issue relating to educational equity and access. Period Poverty. Period Poverty is defined as the lack of access and/or ability to afford menstrual hygiene products and the associated cultural stigma which institutionalizes generational gender-based discrimination and reinforces harmful gender stereotypes. In the United States one in five girls have left school early or missed school entirely due to lack of access to menstrual hygiene products.

AMY BARRATT: In 21st century American schools have an obligation to serve students equitably. Every student has the reassurance that their school restrooms are outfitted with the necessities to accommodate their biological needs yet, for roughly half the United States population there's a glaring exception to this commitment. Menstrual hygiene products. Providing these products in school bathrooms to address a fundamental biological process is not different than providing soap and toilet paper.

CHARLOTTE HALLISEY: When our efforts began we launched a petition to gather support for this issue

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from individuals across the state. Today we have over 1,200 signatures from supporters across Connecticut. This past June Charlotte and I presented to our district Board of Education resulting in a successful adoption of an ordinance requiring that menstrual hygiene products be provided at no cost to students in our town's public middle and high school bathrooms demonstrating their support in the effort to end Period Poverty. From there we began advocating at the state level. First meeting was Senator Bergstein and subsequently Senator Abrams. Since then we have created a student coalition comprised of students in every county across the state who supports the bills as well as partnered with many organizations who worked nationally on issues involving gender equity involving equality of opportunity. But now we need your support. It's time for Connecticut to continue to demonstrate its commitment to educational -- educational excellence an opportunity for all its students joining New York, California, Illinois, and New Hampshire in passing similar legislation. Educational equity is essential to socioeconomic advancement. Gender based discrimination harms us all. Please help show our nation that Connecticut recognizes the essential truth. Gender based rights are human rights. Together we can help end period poverty and achieve gender equality. Thank you all for your time and consideration.

AMY BARRATT: And on the question that was posed in a previous testimony regarding only providing products to schools that have over 50 percent low income students, we think that it's very important to think about how we would never consider giving toilet paper or other products that are necessary for

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natural bodily functions only to schools that have over 50 percent low income student rate. This is a human right and should not be looked at from a financial viewpoint. Additionally in Greenwich which is an affluent community 20 percent of students are from low income families so your point there our low income students in low income communities who already have to deal with all kinds of social and financial discrepancies we think it's only fair to apply this solution to all students who need supplies regardless of where they live. We shouldn't penalize low income students just because they live in wealthy communities.

REP. LINEHAN: You punctuated your point. Thank you very much for that and we absolutely do agree with you. We shouldn't ever leave anyone out and we do believe it's the same as toilet paper. I say we and I speak for our chairs. I can't speak for the entire committee but I also have to say and I'm just being honest is that sometimes the only way is to get something passed is with some compromise so while we absolutely agree and we would like to see if happen that way I just want to prepare you it just may not pass that way and so the reality of the building or such that we have to be prepared for that. Ultimately the chairs of this committee that not being the case and try to gather enough votes to move that forward. I just wanted to give you just the background. It's not that we don't believe that, that should happen. It's just that the nature of the legislature is about compromise and ensuring that we can do that, however one thing that you didn't address that was discussed before was the piece where we educate districts who maybe don't understand that this is a problem and I had said

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previously that there is someone from my district who is watching, still watching by the way. I just got a text message from him. He's still watching and then he wants to take this on and so I want to also kind of give you an idea here that last year we brought up a bill that came to us from Sibby Hill Middle School in Naugatuk and it's under agenda next week as well and it's regarding energy drinks and you must show ID to buy energy drinks if you are 16 years old or younger. While it didn't get out of committee last year they did spend a lot of time up here lobbying other legislators and they got a lot of people behind it by the way but, what we did in between the two years in which this is coming up for a vote is these kids made pamphlets regarding the safety that's needed for kids ingesting energy drinks. They're in all doctor's offices around the area. I think it's like five separate towns and they're lobbying not just legislators but doctors and stores and they're really putting the work in here and I think that that is so important because if this legislation has to go by baby steps which trust me I would love if we didn't and we all know, what do they call me, don't care how I want it now. Don't care how I want it now. That is my stance, right? If we're going to do it let's do it but like I said the realities of the building are that sometimes we need to go in incremental steps and I want you to think about that right, because if it does pass the way we all want it that's great. If it doesn't there are other things that you can do, and I think that that's going to be an important part of the process for you guys. I would like to see if passed as is but there's also other ways that you can get other districts involved and you can lobby, and this committee would be happy to help you

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with that information on exactly how to do that. If the good senator would like to contact us we'll get you everything you need. With that, are there any questions or comments for these wonderful women? Yes, Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD): Thank you so much. I just could not say, wow again. It's very heartwarming. Thank you for your leadership. Both of you have been doing this effort and I had a chance to meet you before you joined with Senator Bergstein and had a whole meeting in this very room so again thank you for your work and it's moving in the right direction and hopefully I know it's going to pass from this committee. I can sense that but hopefully going to go beyond that and pass as a law and I'm looking forward to it. I think your stats that it is a right is the way to go because while we look at everything through the prism of money but you're actually fighting a bigger battle and this is about changing the mindsets so that's -- that's going to be important. When we are saying that it's okay to not talk about money for some one gender and then we talk about money for the other gender is a problem and I think that's going to be the battle. I think this will serve as a way to help us as a society move in a better direction. Thank you so much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Any other questions? Well, hearing no other questions I would once again like to say on behalf of my Co-Chair Senator Moore and myself and the entire committee, we do have some pins to give you to thank you for being up here so you remember your experience and we hope that you come back up to lobby and to testify and to keep working so thank you very much. I'll meet you over here with your pins and as we're doing that Cindy

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Privio if you would please approach. My apologies Cindy. Thank you so much for being here.

CINDY PRIVIO: Representative Linehan and all esteemed members of the committee I hope that you're going to give me a little bit of leeway at the end because as you're going to see I represent a different side.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excuse me ma'am. Can we have some attention for this nice woman from the committee side. We would appreciate it. Thank you. Go ahead ma'am.

CINDY PROVIO: What I was saying is I hope you're going to give me a little leverage at the end of this if I run out of time because we have, we are stakeholder in something that is very important. People and children and young adults that are convicted of sexual offense. I have a not for profit called One Standard of Justice and we're here to oppose raised House Bill 5199. The recent push in criminal reform has been built around evidence-based policies that rely on research to define risk rather than the specific crime especially in the area of sexual offense and the research is clear. Recidivism rates for offenders are low. In two consecutive five-year studies with Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management they found that the total number of arrests for new sex crimes among this cohort in the first five years after leaving prison was 55. That's 5.5 arrests per year. Contrast with the general population they were arrested though the people were not looking at. They were arrested 488 times across the same time period for sexual offense. The intent of this proposed legislation and is an attempt to further

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punish offenders, not a rational response to actual risk. As of 2019 Connecticut was only one of nine states to spend more money on the Department of Corrections than on higher education. While Owis J recognizes that probation is carried out by the judicial branch the salient point is that we continue to look to costly statutory remedies that do nothing to lower risk yet waste our scarce resources primarily to cross the border at 50-year lows. Connecticut is beginning to accept that the strategies of mass incarceration have not had a significant impact on this crime reduction but have had significant impacts on families and communities and a disproportionate impact on people of color. And our state budget, look no further Connecticut sex offense registry where blacks are represented at a rate at twice their percentage of the state population. There is no reason not to believe proposals like 5199 will have the same disproportionate -- will not -- there is no reason not to believe like raised House Bill 5199 will have the same disproportionate impacts. We believe in a policy of do no more harm. We believe our state's scarce resources would be better spent on up steering prevention strategies and victim services than on downstream post incident strategies of unproven merit. We believe that any sexual offense is one too many. We also believe that our criminal justice system should be moving toward a restorative, redemptive, transformative system rather than the adversarial legal one we have today. This bill meets none of those standards.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Ma'am, I ask that you summarize.

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CINDY PRIZIO: Thank you. What I want to say is that the psychologist Carl Hanson, he is probably one of the top three international experts in this area of sexual offense, recidivism, treatment, etc. and he says first of all that these people are no more likely to reoffend. In fact they're less likely. They are, no Representative Linehan what I'm saying is that I'm a stakeholder where we feel we should be brought to the table and give you a presentation on what's really true.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Ma'am I ask that you be respectful of the committee as we are being respectful of you. Thank you.

CINDY PRIZIO: I apologize but what I'm going to tell you is that the other thing that there is disparate views on is the longer a person with a sexual offense is in the community offense free the less likely they will ever reoffend. And I'm going to tell you, let me give you two stats and I'm going to leave you with that other than asking you let me put together a presentation so that you can see the view from the other side. Adults who are convicted of sexual offense have a 96 percent rate of never offending again. Children less than two and a half percent. We're -- I'm sorry but there's another side of this and you're only hearing one side of the story. This is social death and in many cases it results in family members or direct suicide of the person convicted especially under the young children and young adults.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Are there any questions from the committee? Yes, Representative Boyd.

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REP. BOYD (50TH): So the only thing -- thank you Madame Chair -- is when you submit testimony through the email address it gets put into the log of all testimony that's submitted so if you have something that would be in a presentation if you were to give it if you send that the clerk will then post it so that all committee members and the public can see everything because when we review bills we look through the testimony for and against that's there so if there's information that you have that you think is really important that the committee sees I would encourage you to send it in and get it added to the official record and as a part of that consideration when it goes through.

CINDY PRIZIO: I have a doctor that's willing to come down pro bono, Hugh Mass who works with Johns Hopkins Moore Center and I think he would be able to show you why we're getting it wrong. We don't want to put kids on probation.

REP. BOYD (50TH): But I would certainly encourage him to also, see because it gets added to the record and the totality of all sides of every issue and there's often not just two sides to issues there's often multi-dimensional. All get added to the record. It's all part of it just like a presentation.

CINDY PRIZIO: In all due respect, we are a primary stakeholder and these lives of these children and adults matter and so I think when you're only look at whether it be a quarter of the pie or a half of the pie you're missing a very important part of it. How can you make decisions without evidence based --
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REP. BOYD (50TH): So, I'm just letting you know that there's an absolute avenue for any information you have to be on the record and part of the consideration. Thank you Madame Chair.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's a very good point, Representative. Thank you. Hearing none thank you very much for your testimony. And with that we conclude our public hearing and we are -- oh I'm sorry is there anyone else who would like to testify? Great! Thank you very much and with that we are adjourned.