



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Public Hearing Testimony

Committee on Children

March 3, 2020



To: Sen. Marilyn Moore, Chair
Rep. Liz Linehan, Chair
Sen. Kevin Kelly, Ranking Member
Rep. Robin Green, Ranking Member
Distinguished Members of the Committee on Children

From: Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

Re: Raised SB 283, An Act Extending the Age of Eligibility for Legal Representation
Provided by the Department of Children and Families

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) **offers the following comments** on Raised SB 283.

The Department is not opposed in concept to youth in DCF care having continuing access to attorneys once they reach 18 years old. Many children in our care choose to remain voluntarily involved with DCF once they reach the age of majority. However, legal representation for these youth is provided for by the Office of Chief Public Defender pursuant to C.G.S. section 51-296a. The age of the children that are represented is driven by C.G.S. section 46b-120. DCF does not have a policy regarding eligibility for legal representation.

While we support providing youth who are 18 and over legal representation, the proper statutes must be amended and additional funding must be made available to the Public Defenders.