



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
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Representative Abercrombie, Senator Moore, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

I am here to testify in favor of Raised House Bill 6562: An Act Concerning Child Support Enforcement. This legislation would permit the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection to appoint up to eight special policemen in the Office of Child Support Services of the Department of Social Services, grant those appointees access to the Connecticut on-line law enforcement teleprocessing system without charge, and develop a more comprehensive task force to study technological initiatives that could be implemented by the state in order to maximize collection of child support in Connecticut.

Connecticut's child support enforcement mechanisms are due for a more comprehensive overhaul in order to increase the effectiveness of collection. In 2013, the General Assembly passed Special Act 13-14, which established a task force to study child support collection efforts in our state and provide recommendations for how to improve enforcement. That task force made eight recommendations for further action to be taken by the General Assembly, three of which have not been implemented since and are the main provisions of this bill.

Increasing the total number of capias officers will help chip away at the thousands of outstanding child support cases statewide, which will be an even more important task following the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, total collections in Connecticut declined by 2% from 2015 to 2019 and total staff was reduced by 5% during the same period. Moreover, Connecticut had 146,004 cases open at the end of 2019, just 5,000 better than it had open at the end of 2018. It has been almost eight years since the original child support task force made its recommendations, yet overall child support collections and state-level support for services have been steadily declining. It is time to reverse that trend by boosting the amount of staff working to collect child support.

Granting capias officers access to the COLLECT system free of charge will unlock key background information from statewide and national databases, and make it easier for existing officers to do their jobs effectively. If we want to increase the effectiveness of child support

collections, then it makes sense both logistically and fiscally to use the resources and data that is readily available.

The third recommendation from the original task force was to create another, more comprehensive task force aimed at identifying the technological needs of our child support system and how the state government can better support those needs. This task force would bring together the designees of relevant state agencies and, more importantly, develop a report that could enlighten policymakers about how we can help procure necessary upgrades to the existing system.

These changes, which once again were first recommended almost eight years ago, will end up saving the state in long run by ensuring more efficient operation and more effective child support collection.

I encourage all members of this committee to recognize the importance of this legislation and grant this bill a favorable report. The hard-working people of our state are counting on it.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Luxenberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

State Representative Geoff Luxenberg