



CONNECTICUT CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE, INC.

Testimony of the Connecticut Children's Alliance/ Krystal Rich, Executive Director
IN SUPPORT OF
HB 6657, An Act Strengthening Protections for Victims of Human Trafficking
SB 1069, An Act Concerning Female Genital Mutilation
Judiciary Committee
March 24th, 2021

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking & other distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) in support or in response to the above referenced Bills. The Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) is the state-wide membership organization of Connecticut's ten child advocacy centers (CACs) and seventeen multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). We are dedicated to the enhancement of a timely and comprehensive multidisciplinary response to child abuse victims and their families. Additionally, CCA serves as the umbrella organization for Prevent Child Abuse CT (PACT), a program dedicated to the prevention of child abuse.

H.B. No. 6657 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) strongly supports H.B.6657. Connecticut's current law defines trafficking as a situation in which there is an exchange of sex for a fee. This definition is problematic as it does not acknowledge a vast majority of sex trafficking victims. In 2014, CCA and state partners developed a system to refer all child sex trafficking cases for a comprehensive response to our MDTs and CACs. The majority of those cases have involved situations where children were exploited for drugs, food, shelter, and other items of value. Due to the current law with an outdated definition, our partners have been, in many cases, unable to seek the justice these victims deserve and protect others from becoming victimized. In order to properly protect our children and hold offenders accountable, it is imperative that we update our current definition.

CCA also recognizes that victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are often caused to commit crimes as a result of being trafficked and under the current law; they may still face consequences for such crimes. The consequences for the trafficking need to be placed on those responsible. This legislation helps ensure survivors of child trafficking have legal options that acknowledge their victimization related to any crimes they were forced to commit while being trafficked.

We urge you to support HB 6657 which would allow our MDT partners to protect all child trafficking victims.

S.B. No. 1069 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

The Connecticut Children's Alliance supports the concept of SB1069 and any attempt to end FGM/C in Connecticut. FGM/C is an extreme form of gender violence and involves the cutting, partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. This human rights violation is used as a tool for control and the potential consequences for victims encompass both short and long-term medical and psychological harm.

CCA is a proud member of the newly formed CT Coalition to End FGM/C. Over the past eight months, this survivor-led group comprised of local, state and national supporters has worked to educate the community on FGM/C, identify ways in which CT could better protect victims, and provide needed resources for survivors. In addition to drafting language to propose for a comprehensive law, the group is currently working on several trainings and a website for partners and victims to identify resources.

While we support any attempt to understand and end FGM/C in CT, CCA hopes that if passed, the proposed legislation SB 1069 does not add any unnecessary delays to the passage of a more comprehensive law that seeks to prevent the practice, support survivors and provide education and training. If passed, we urge you to ensure the CT Coalition to End FGM/C is involved in any planning and implementation of the proposed study as this work needs to be survivor-led and informed by those within the communities we are looking to support.

Thank you for your time and attention to these important matters impacting our state's children.

Respectfully Submitted,

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