

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA15-58

SB863

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Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public
Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives
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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2015**

**VOL.58
PART 15
4903 – 5253**

/kc
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 27, 2015

Total Number Voting	145
Necessary for Passage	73
Those voting Yea	145
Those voting Nay	0
Absent and not voting	6

REP. ORANGE (48th):

The bill passes. Will the Clerk please call
Calendar No. 423.

CLERK:

On Page 23, House Calendar 423, Favorable
Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Children.
Senate Bill 836 - excuse me, 863, AN ACT CONCERNING
JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS.

REP. ORANGE (48th):

Representative John Hampton of the 16th. You
have the floor, sir.

REP. HAMPTON (16th):

Good evening, madam. I move acceptance of the
Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of
the bill in concurrence -

REP. ORANGE (48th):

The question before the Chamber is acceptance
of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and
passage of the bill. Representative Hampton.

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REP. ORANGE (48th):

And I believe it's also in concurrence with the Senate.

REP. ORANGE (48th):

In concurrence with the Senate.

REP. HAMPTON (16th):

Thank you, madam. This bill simply is a technical change to update the statute so they are gender inclusive of females in terms of assessment and assignment of juvenile offenders. And this passed unanimously through Committee. And it's a small, minor change but a much needed update to the statutes. And I move adoption. Thank you.

REP. ORANGE (48th):

Will you care to remark further on the bill before us? Representative Kokoruda. Good evening.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Good evening. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand also in support of this bill. It's a very simple technical change. These are children that we do a needs assessment. They're some of our children at highest risk. And up till now the statute only addressed our boys. And now it also includes our girls so I stand in support. It's a

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good bill. It ought to pass.

REP. ORANGE (48th):

Thank you, Representative. Will you care to remark further on the bill before us? Will you care to remark further? Will you care to remark further on the bill before us? If not, staff and guests please come to the Well of the House.

Members, take your seats. The machine will be open.

CLERK:

[bell ringing] The House of Representatives is voting by roll. The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please report to the Chamber immediately.

[pause]

REP. ORANGE (48th):

Have all members voted? Have all members voted? Please the check the board to determine if your vote is properly cast. If so, the machine will be locked and will the Clerk take a tally, please.

And will the Clerk please announce the tally.

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CLERK:

Senate Bill 863

Total Number Voting 145

Necessary for Passage 73

Those voting Yea 145

Those voting Nay 0

Absent and not voting 6

REP. ORANGE (48th):

The bill passes in concurrence with the
Senate. [gavel]

Will the Clerk please call Calendar No. 631?

CLERK:

On Page 47, House Calendar 631, Favorable
Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Insurance
and Real Estate. Substitute Senate Bill 913, AN
ACT CONCERNING HEALTH CARE DATA REPORTING AND
ENROLLMENT OF NONSTATE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES IN THE
STATE ENROLLMENT - excuse me, STATE EMPLOYEE HEALTH
PLAN.

REP. ORANGE (48th):

Representative Tercyak.

REP. TERCYAK (26th):

Good evening, Madam Speaker. Thank you very
much for this opportunity. This is a fine bill

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2015**

**VOL. 58
PART 2
341 – 702**

/jw
SENATE

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April 14, 2015

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I'd like to mark Calendar Page 3, Calendar 83, Senate Bill 863 as Go. I'd also like to mark Calendar Page 2, Calendar 75, Senate Bill 864 as Go.

Calendar Page 3, Calendar 84, Senate Bill 843, Go.
Calendar Page 5, Calendar 95, Senate Bill 925, Go. And
lastly, Calendar Page 9, Calendar 151, Senate Bill 956
as Go.

And if the Clerk can please start off with the first
item.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, whenever you're ready.

CLERK:

Page 3, Calendar bill 83, Senate Bill No. 863, AN ACT
CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK AND NEEDS
ASSESSMENTS, Favorable Report.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bartolomeo.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I move
acceptance of the Joint Committee's Joint Favorable
Report, and I urge passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

The motion before the Chamber is acceptance and
passage. Do you care to remark further?

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, this
bill, AN ACT CONCERNING JUST - JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK

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AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT, conforms statute to current practice. There's a risk and needs assessment that's given prior to commitment at a DCF facility.

Currently the language in our statutes references only males as w - previously there was only a male facility, and now we have a female facility and so we are making the changes to accommodate for that. And that is the extent of the bill, so I urge passage, please, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Do you care to remark further?
Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN:

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise in support of the bill. The bill would require DCF to risk - and the bill would require DCF to place the boys and girls that, who are delinquent to, in - let me begin again, sorry.

The current law requires DCF to conduct a risk and needs assessment to ensure delinquent boys in the highest risk level are placed in the, an all-male only Connecticut Juvenile Training School.

The bill simply changes the, from including only the male to include the female delinquent girls who are at the highest risk are placed in an appropriate secure treatment setting. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Do you care to remark further? Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Mr. President. Through you, just a question or two to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please frame your question.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you. Through you, Mr. President, to Senator Bartolomeo. My briefing that I received on the bill speaks of high-risk young people, and through you, what are we talking about when we talk about the highest level or high-risk people? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bartolomeo.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Yes, thank you, through you, Mr. President, to the good Senator. These are juveniles who have been adjudicated and assigned by the Court to a certain type of facility. Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you. So all the folks that are placed in, potentially placed into these facilities have been before a, in this case, I guess a juvenile court and not just an administrative hearing done at the Department of - DCF, is that correct, through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bartolomeo.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Yes, sir, through you, Mr. President. The court orders that a child be either committed to a couple different places. About 14,000 children per year go to the juvenile court in Connecticut. Most are handled by the CSSD, Court Support Services Division, and about 450 of these are committed to the Department of Children and Families.

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So these children are serviced through the juvenile justice unit of DCF, which current - which prior to now, or prior to about a year ago, was the CJTS facility near the grounds of Solnit South, and now there is a new facility called Pueblo, which has a maximum of 10, 11 beds, and that's a female facility.

So in order to make sure that this risk and needs assessment is given both to the females and to the males, we're changing the statute to eliminate males and just refer to the children in general, so it encompasses both female and male. Through you, Mr. Pres - Madam. President. [laughs]

THE CHAIR: (The President in the Chair.)

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Madam President. Through you, I think the good Senator testified that there was approximately 450 or 430, somewhere in that range of juveniles that were adjudicated and remanded to the department for placement in a higher level facility.

And am I correct to hear that the number of this new facility, Pueblo, is only 10 to 12 beds? And does that - how does that fit into the proportion of the juveniles that are adjudicated to these facilities? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bartolomeo.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you, those that are highest risk, probably through this needs assessment - risk and needs assessment - are going to the locked facilities. So the Pueblo is the locked facility, the CJTS for the boys is the locked facility.

/jw
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There are other programs that they can go to such as group homes and other residential treatment programs as well. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

One last question. How did we determine that building a facility, if it's, if it's state built or built, run, I don't know the make-up of the Pueblo facility, so that might be a side question. If that's a contracted entity that we deal with. That 10 or 12 beds is enough to accommodate the population. If we truly have, if we're doing an assessment and we find that the individual warrants the type of secure facility that Pueblo would offer versus a group home can only offer, how did we make that determination? If she knows. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bartolomeo.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you, the need for this facility came out of the fact that we did not have a secure facility for girls prior to about a year ago, so what we had to do is if they required that level of, I don't know, security watching, commitment, they had to go out of state, which was, you know, certainly not something that we wanted to have to do.

And we were finding that otherwise many of these young women who te - who were going to the Pueblo facility tend to be those who have been abused in some way, shape, or form. So they were running. They were going into facilities that were not locked, not secured, and I - and I don't mean, you know, their individual room, I mean the secure - the perimeter, right, and they were running. And so, and that was happening often enough that there was determined to be a need for a facility of this type.

/jw
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Now the reason for only having 10, 11, and I think it maxes out at the possibility of 12, but we haven't gotten there yet, is because that's really not our goal. That's not where we want our kids. We want our kids in that facility until they can get to a point where they are trusting and they're able to be treated and they're not just running.

And that's what some of these young women need to get to a point where, after, you know, I think they're trying for about 60 days, maybe up to 3 months is about what the goal is. Then they can step down into a less-secure facility.

So this is a need for a very acute population, and hopefully they don't remain there very long. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President, and I thank the gentlewoman for those answers.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? If not, Senator Bartolomeo.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Madam President, I would test the waters. If there's no objection, may we put this on Consent?

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, ma'am.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO:

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

/jw
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ability to access CHRO by having provisions for discriminatory practices.

This is a bill that came out of the Committee 13-0. It is a bill that makes all of those who work with us, those interns, much safer than they otherwise might be, and I would urge passage.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark? Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. I'm sorry?

SENATOR WINFIELD:

Referral. That's what we're doing.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move that this item be referred to the Judiciary Committee.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, would the Clerk please call the items on the Consent Calendar in that we might have a vote of the Consent Calendar after that - immediately after.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, could you please call the roll - I mean, the items on the Consent Calendar, please, and the machine'll be opened after.

CLERK:

From Senate Agenda 1, Senate Joint Resolution 46, Senate Joint Resolution 47, Senate Joint Resolution

/jw
SENATE

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April 14, 2015

48. Page 1, Calendar No. 285, Senate Resolution 31.
Page 2, Calendar No. 74, Senate Bill 862. Page 2 -

THE CHAIR:

Senator - Mr. Clerk. I think on Page 2, 67.

CLERK:

Sixty-seven, yeah, S.B. 69. Page 3, Calendar bill 83,
S.B. 863. Page 7, Calendar bill 115, S.B. 866. Page 8,
Calendar bill 123, S.B. 755. Page 12, Calendar bill
172, S.B. 869.

Page 12, Calendar 173, S.B. 1022. Page 20, Calendar
bill 245, S.B. 487. Page 22, Calendar bill 262, S.B.
929. Page 23, Calendar bill 265, S.B. 966. Page 24,
Calendar bill 275, S.B. 193.

Page 29, Calendar bill 313, S.B. 575. Page 32,
Calendar bill 331. S.B. 257. And Page 37, Calendar
bill 141, S.B. 694.

THE CHAIR:

At this time, will you call for a roll call vote. The machine is open on the Consent Calendar.

CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

[pause]

CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
First Consent Calendar of the day.

[pause]

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted. The machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

/jw
SENATE

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April 14, 2015

CLERK:

Consent Calendar

Total Number Voting	35
Necessary for Adoption	18
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Absent/not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar has been adopted. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, that concludes our votes for today. Before we adjourn, I just wanted to take a moment to mention, I'm sure everybody knows that today is UConn day here at the state capitol, and we wanna certainly congratulate our women's team for their three-peat championship and their tenth national title, and I'm sure the Senate can give our UConn women's team a big congratulatory applause if you don't mind.

[applause]

For their win. And we're very proud of their efforts and appreciate what they do and how they represent our state across this country, and I just wanted to take a moment. I know you may have a few words as well, madam.

THE CHAIR:

I do, thank you, Senator, but I'm going to ask for points of personal privilege and announcements at this time. Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN:

Madam President, for the purp -

THE CHAIR:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**CHILDREN
PART 2
469 – 975**

2015

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February 17, 2015

dr/mcr/gbr SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN 1:30 P.M.

REP. ZIOBRON: Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. URBAN: Thank you, Representative Ziobron.

Are there any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

ROBERTA FRIEDMAN: Thank you very much.

REP. URBAN: And we'll return to the Legislator, agency head list with Barbara Claire from Department of Children and Families.

Welcome.

BARBARA CLAIRE: Good morning.

Good morning, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, excuse me, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Senator Martin, Representative Kokoruda, and members of the Committee on Children.

My name is Barbara Claire. I'm the agency legal director for the Department of Children and Families and I'm here to speak on several of the -- the bills on your public hearing agenda.

I'm joined here by Dr. Linda Dixon, who is our administrator for Adolescent and Juvenile Justice Services who can answer some more specific questions if you have them.

The first three bills that I would like to comment on are S.B. 863, H.B. 6723, and H.B.

HB6724
SB22
HB6725
SB842
HB5658

6724, which are DCF proposals and we thank the committee for raising these bills.

S.B. Number 863, AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, amends the statute regarding risk and needs assessments for juvenile offenders to include applicability to girls in the juvenile justice system. The current statute requiring risk and needs assessment for delinquent youth applies only to male juvenile offenders, although such assessments are currently conducted for girls in the juvenile justice system. This proposal updates the statute to conform to current practice.

H. B. Number 6723, AN ACT CONCERNING THE GROUNDS FOR TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS, updates the statutory grounds for termination of parental rights consistent with other statutes and current practices. Previously, abuse as a category was included as a form of neglect, and now it -- and it no longer is and there's a need to revise the statutes to make a distinct legal basis for the initial neglect, abused, or uncared for petition.

House Bill Number 6724, AN ACT CONCERNING TECHNICAL AND MINOR REVISIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES STATUTES. As the title implies make several minor revisions to DCF statutes and I'm happy to -- to answer specific questions about those if you have them.

Regarding other bills on your public agenda hearing, let me start with proposed S.B. Number 622, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. We would

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February 17, 2015

dr/mcr/gbr SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN 1:30 P.M.

of that.

MARTHA STONE: We don't have the exact numbers. I -
- the estimate is \$1,000 -- as Mr. Bunker said,
\$1,000 per child per year. And, you know,
there could be a situation where the committee
may recommend a phase-in for the different
groups so that the fiscal note wouldn't be so
high that the bill would -- would die at the --
at the end.

So I would like to see some group of kids get
that right away and you may want to decide a
situation to phase it in for the rest of the
group.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO: Exactly.

Question -- any more questions? Were you done,
Senator Martin?

Anyone else?

Okay. Well, thank you so much, Martha. We
definitely look forward to your expertise when
we finish crafting this.

MARTHA STONE: Thank you.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO: Next we have Edie? Okay. Edie
Joseph with Jessie and is that Rochelle?
(Inaudible)? Come on up, ladies.

EDIE JOSEPH: Hi, Senator Bartolomeo and
Representative Urban and other members of the
Children's Committee. Thank you guys so much
for your time and patience.

As you know, I'm Edie from Connecticut Voices

SB842
SB863

for Children. I have submitted extensive written testimony in support of S.B. 863 and S.B. 824, and I would urge you all to read that and to ask me if you have any questions about either of those bills.

I'm now going to turn it over to these wonderful young women who are going to talk about their experiences with DCF and the importance of educational surrogates.

So first we have Jessie.

JESSALENE EPPS: Good evening, Senator, Representative, and all members of the Committee of Children.

I submit this testimony in support of S.B. 842 and H.B. 5658. My name is Jessalene Epps, I'm 18, and I'm a senior at CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.

I've been involved in foster care for eight years and ongoing. I have never been a part of the juvenile justice system. I do not receive special education services. I have never had an educational surrogate.

I have had a great big deal of struggles in the -- the math area in school due to moving around and missing mass amount of school days. I have failed multiple math classes due to no help from home and DCF. Being involved -- involved in DCF and/or juvenile justice system can and will put barriers in your education for multiple reasons.

I believe an educational surrogate can make a big difference in a child's life by helping



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
FOR THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 17, 2015**

IN SUPPORT OF:

RAISED HB 5658 AAC EDUCATIONAL SURROGATES, THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND CHILDREN REQUIRING SPECIAL EDUCATION

SB 842 AN ACT CONCERNING FOSTER PARENTS AND THE DESIGNATION OF SURROGATE PARENTS

S.B. NO. 863 AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee on Children, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Abby Anderson; I am the executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to stopping the criminalization of Connecticut's children. We work to reduce the number of youth who enter the system and ensure the juvenile justice system is safe, fair and effective for those who are involved. In alignment with that mission, the Alliance is in favor of H.B. 5658, *An Act Concerning Educational Surrogates, the Juvenile Justice System and Children Requiring Special Education* and SB 842, *An Act Concerning Foster Parents and the Designation of Surrogate Parents*. We are also supporting S.B. 863, *An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice Risk And Needs Assessments*.

H.B. 5658 would give youth committed delinquent to DCF the same access to educational advocacy supports that their peers committed to the foster care system already receive. As parents of youth committed delinquent do not lose their parental rights, it is important to note that these educational surrogates should only be provided with parental consent. To that end, we would respectfully request that the language of SB 842, which addresses parental consent for youth committed delinquent, be added to HB 5658.

As this committee is well aware, and has worked to address with legislation including last year's focus on Raise the Grade, youth in the justice system are typically alarmingly behind in school. DCF's recent annual report to the legislature regarding the boys in Connecticut Juvenile Training School in 2014 showed that 27% of the 16 year olds admitted last year had a reading comprehension level of third grade or below. Only 38% of them have a reading comprehension level that is at 7th grade or above.

DCF is focused on the educational achievement of the delinquent youth in its custody, implementing Raise the Grade programs where piloted. Working with individual districts can be challenging and time-consuming. Educational surrogates, engaged with parental consent, have the expertise, time and relationships built to more quickly and effectively

navigate with the local educational agencies to ensure that the education needs of the youth can be met.

We know that education is the key to employment. Employment is a key to reducing recidivism. An investment in the educational achievement of these youth today is not only the right thing to do for these young people, but a way to save taxpayer dollars going forward.

The Alliance also supports SB 863, An Act Concerning Risk Assessments. This legislation simply ensures consistency in policy and practice. Currently statute states that boys may only be committed delinquent to the Connecticut Juvenile Training School if they score as high-risk on a risk assessment tool. The statute was written before the Pueblo Unit for girls was opened last year. SB 863 would require, similar to current statute, that girls would only be committed delinquent to CJTS's Pueblo Unit when assessed as high-risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.

Alliance member organizations: AFCAMP, Center for Children's Advocacy, Center for Effective Practice, CHDI, Connecticut Junior Republic, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, FSW, NAMI Connecticut, Keep the Promise Coalition, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Tow Foundation, The Village for Families and Children



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony

Committee on Children

February 17, 2015



S.B. No. 863 AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

The Department of Children and Families **supports** S.B. No. 863, An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice Risk and Needs Assessments.

This bill amends subsection (j) of section 46b-140 regarding risk and needs assessments for juvenile offenders to include its applicability to girls in the juvenile justice system. The current statute requiring a risk and needs assessment for delinquent youth only applies to male juvenile offenders, although such assessments are currently conducted for girls in the juvenile justice system. This proposal updates the statute to conform to current practice.



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

Testimony of
Christine Rapillo
Director of Delinquency Defense and Child Protection

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 17, 2015

Raised Senate Bill 863
AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of Raised Senate Bill 863, An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice Risk and Needs Assessment. This proposal would make a technical amendment to Connecticut General Statute Section 46b-140, which currently requires the Department of Children and Families to use a risk and needs assessment to ensure that the male children who enter the Connecticut Juvenile Training School truly present the highest risk. Male children at CJTS are specifically referenced because young women are statutorily barred from that facility. This proposal would ensure that risk and need assessment tools be used before any child, regardless of gender, was placed in a secure facility. The Office of the Chief Public Defender respectfully suggests that language be added to this proposal to require that the risk and needs assessment be scientifically validated for use on a juvenile justice population and that the Department of Children and Families work with the Judicial Branch to explore a single assessment that could be used across the juvenile justice system.

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 Line 1

Testimony Concerning Senate Bill 863 An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice Risk and Needs Assessments

Edie Joseph and Cyd Oppenheimer, J.D.
 Committee on Children
 February 17, 2015

Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

I am a Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that promotes the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

On behalf of Voices for Children I am here today to **support and to suggest recommendations for Senate Bill 863, An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice Risk and Needs Assessments**. Those involved in Connecticut's juvenile justice system – young women in particular – are some of our state's most vulnerable and at-risk young people. It is imperative that we treat these adolescents fairly and provide them with the opportunities to become productive and successful adults. This proposed legislation amends statute to ensure that a risk and needs assessment classification system will be used for girls as well as boys when determining their placement in secure facilities. **However, this proposed legislation should be amended to ensure that 1) the risk and needs assessment DCF uses is valid, and 2) only high-risk young people are placed in secure facilities. The legislature should also vote to re-invest saved funds back into the DCF budget.**

Current statute requires that DCF use a risk and needs assessment system to determine when boys should be placed in the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CTJS), the secure locked facility for males. The proposed legislation would make the statute gender neutral, and require that such a classification system be used for all individuals to determine placement in an "appropriate secure treatment setting." This proposed change is important because it ensures that a risk and needs assessment, a critical element in determining the appropriate placement for a young person in the juvenile justice system, will be used for girls as well as boys. However, this proposal also presents an opportunity to review and strengthen the state's juvenile justice practices across the board, for both genders.

First, the legislation should be amended to require that DCF implement a *valid and reliable risk and needs assessment instrument*. In a 2013 study on DCF's Juvenile Services Division, researchers at Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform found that DCF's current assessment instrument is not properly validated for the population it intends to serve, and should be updated for reliability, accuracy, equity, and utility.¹ A valid instrument "accurately distinguishes between subgroups of youth according to the probability that they will engage in delinquent behavior," and thus helps ensure that youth are provided with services that will produce effective outcomes.² In addition, Georgetown recommended that DCF should make certain that the instrument is administered and utilized appropriately by parole officers and other staff.³

Second, the proposal and current statute should be amended to specify that *only children at the highest risk level be placed in a "secure treatment setting."* If ever used, secure facilities should be reserved for only those juveniles with the highest risk level, with "risk" measured by likelihood of re-offending and of endangering the public.⁴ Differentiating risk from need (which, as

discussed, can only effectively happen with a valid risk and needs assessment instrument) is especially critical when serving delinquent girls, who are often survivors of trauma and victimization that preceded their offending behavior. Data from 2009 on Connecticut girls committed to DCF or on parole reveal that 52% had diagnosed trauma disorders, and 89% had more than one diagnosed psychological disorder.⁵ Secure residential facilities, such as DCF's recently opened Pueblo, are unlikely to be the most effective treatment for this high-need population; in fact, "group care treatment cannot be found on any list of evidence-based treatments for youth with serious emotional and behavioral problems. Instead, it has sometimes been cited as a treatment that may potentially have adverse effects."⁶

Furthermore, studies show that placing low-risk but high-need youth in more restrictive placements like Pueblo and CJTS can actually make them more likely to re-offend – undermining a main purpose of the juvenile justice system.⁷ In contrast to best practice, 2010 data show that technical violations (such as not making appointments or violating curfew), not serious crimes that indicate high risk level, are "the largest driver of confinement placements" at CJTS.⁸ It is imperative to ensure that what has currently been happening with boys in the juvenile justice system does not happen to girls, as well. Rather, Connecticut should improve its practice for both boys and girls by ensuring that these facilities are used for only the highest-risk level individuals in the juvenile justice system.

Finally, in order to ensure that secure placement facilities are not used only because there are no alternatives, the legislature must vote to provide the funds to enable DCF to expand its continuum of services for all young people. A series of recent reforms, coupled with a national trend of falling foster care populations, has led to a reduction in DCF's appropriation by \$183 million (in inflation adjusted 2013 dollars) from FY09 to FY14.⁹ While many of these reforms (including decreased reliance on incarceration) are positive, the money DCF has saved the state should be reinvested in a robust array of community services, including the development of a full continuum of services for children in the care of DCF.¹⁰ **In particular, the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform study recommended "increases in intermediate sanctions as an alternative to secure confinement and residential placement."¹¹ The study suggested investments be made in a variety of evidence-based practices, such as: cognitive-behavioral programs, mentoring, group therapy and counseling, behavioral contracting and incentive systems, mediation, family therapy and counseling, restitution, academic programs, peer and individual counseling, and job-related programs.¹² With adequate funding, DCF could improve and expand its community-based services for young people of all genders.**

Implementing a valid risk and needs assessment instrument, ensuring that only youth with the highest-risk level are put in the most secure placements, and reinvesting saved funds into DCF will help make sure that Pueblo and CJTS are not being used simply because there are no better alternatives. When young people are served in appropriate, community-based settings and go on to lead productive adult lives, our state saves money on costly and often unnecessary jail-like settings, *and* lives up to its moral imperative to help its young people have a bright future.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or any other staff members with any questions.

Thank you,

Edie Joseph
Policy Fellow
Connecticut Voices for Children

¹ See, Marion R. Kelly, MSW, James C. Howell, Ph.D., and Kristen Johnson, Ph.D., "Final Report for the State of Connecticut," CT Department of Children and Families, (June 2013), p.36-40. Available at: http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/juvenile_services/pdf/connecticutparolereport_nov_final.pdf. This publication is part of Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform's "Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project." Connecticut is one of four states participating in the Project. For more information, see <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/jjsip/jjsip.html>.

² James C. Howell, "Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework, Second Edition," (2009), SAGE Publications, Inc, p. 230.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ For more on the role of risk, see "Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Practices: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice," Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University, (December 2010), available at: <http://forumfyi.org/files/ImprovingEffectivenessofJuvenileJusticePrograms.pdf>. Also see, Marion R. Kelly, MSW, James C. Howell, Ph.D., and Kristen Johnson, Ph.D., "Preliminary Report for the State of Connecticut," CT Department of Children and Families, (June 2013), p.36-40.

⁵ Data from DCF Bureau of Juvenile Services (DCF girlsghinfoin 1-18-09.xls), available at: <http://www.ctjja.org/resources/pdf/GirlsInCTJJSsystem.pdf>. For more on dealing effectively with trauma, see "Building a Trauma-Informed System of Care for Children in Connecticut, presentation to Sandy Hook Commission," Robert Franks, PhD, Connecticut Center for Effective Practice, Child Health and Development Institute, available at: http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/lib/malloy/SHAC_Doc_2013.04.26_Franks_presentation.pdf.

⁶ Sigrid James, "What Works in Group Care? – A Structured Review of Treatment Models for Group Homes and Residential Care." Children and Youth Services Review (February 2011); 33(2): 308-321, available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3314708/>.

⁷ Michael Baglivio, "Briefing Report: The Risk Principle," Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Research and Planning, (March 2013), available at: <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/docs/research2/briefing-report-the-risk-principle.pdf?sfvrsn=0>. Also see "Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Practices: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice," Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University, (December 2010), available at: <http://forumfyi.org/files/ImprovingEffectivenessofJuvenileJusticePrograms.pdf>, "...subjecting juvenile offenders to punishment beyond that which is inherent in the level of control necessary for public safety is likely to be counter-productive to reducing recidivism." p. 12.

⁸ See, Marion R. Kelly, MSW, James C. Howell, Ph.D., and Kristen Johnson, Ph.D., "Final Report for the State of Connecticut," CT Department of Children and Families, (June 2013), p.2. Available at: http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/juvenile_services/pdf/connecticutparolereport_nov_final.pdf.

⁹ See, Kenneth Feder, Matthew Santacrose, and Sharon Langer, J.D., M.Ed., "Testimony Opposing Appropriations for the Department of Children and Families," (February 14, 2014), available at: http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/021414_approps_reducedappropsdcf.pdf.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See, Marion R. Kelly, MSW, James C. Howell, Ph.D., and Kristen Johnson, Ph.D., "Final Report for the State of Connecticut," CT Department of Children and Families, (June 2013), p.31. Available at: http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/juvenile_services/pdf/connecticutparolereport_nov_final.pdf.

¹² *Ibid.*



CONNECTICUT
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

February 16, 2015

SB 00863: AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

SB 00839: AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S ISSUES

SB 00840: AN ACT CONCERNING THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and Members of the Committee on Children:

As Director of Professional Affairs for the Connecticut Psychological Association (CPA), I am writing to offer CPA's support for Senate Bills 863, 839 & 840.

SB 863 provides for an important amendment to the Connecticut General Statutes to ensure the relevant section on risk and needs assessments in the juvenile justice system is equally applicable to females and males. Currently, the statutory language only applies to males.

SB's 839 & 840 propose studies to evaluate, respectively, "the mental, emotional and physical issues" faced by Connecticut children, and the efficacy of programs addressing the well-being of Connecticut children offered by the Department of Children and Families. With data on both the mental health needs of children in the state, as well as whether and to what extent those needs are being met, targeted programs can be developed to more directly and efficiently address these issues. Children are the future of Connecticut and the more we can meet their needs at an earlier age, the more likely they will become well-adjusted, productive members of society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Traci Cipriano, PhD

Traci Cipriano, JD, PhD
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Director of Professional Affairs