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State of Connecticut*

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**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN**

**FEBRUARY 16, 2016**

**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINE RAPILLO  
DIRECTOR OF DELINQUENCY DEFENSE AND CHILD PROTECTION  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES**

**Raised Senate Bill 75  
AN ACT CONCERNING DETAINED YOUTH**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of **Raised Senate Bill 75, An Act Concerning Detained Youth**, although it has a concern in regards to Section 6. Section 1 makes clear the Connecticut Juvenile Training School should be maintained with a therapeutic focus aimed at rehabilitating the youth confined. This section also looks to improve transparency and accountability by providing that a data driven improvement system will be used to track outcomes. This will help ensure that the youth who enter CJTS experience positive results from their time in confinement.

Section 2 adds the Department of Education, Department of Social Services, Department of Developmental Services, Office of Early Childhood Department of Public Health and Court Support Services, Judicial Branch to the data reporting requirements for the implementation for DCF's children's behavioral health plan required by 17a-22bb and requires that DCF, Department of Corrections and the Judicial Branch collaborate to reduce the negative impact of confinement on the mental, emotional and behavioral health of confined youth under the age of 20. These are all good steps towards a juvenile justice system that is seamless, transparent and accountable. Focusing on the impact of confinement on the mental health of young adults will identify appropriate programs as Connecticut moves to replace CJTS with a more therapeutic treatment modality and as 18-20 year olds are transitioned to the juvenile justice system.

Section 3 mandates that the Office of the Child Advocate conduct a report on all facilities that confine or detain children. This type of oversight and reporting is already within the statutory

authority of the Child Advocate but a specific mandate for a report to the general assembly will ensure that all agencies cooperate to the fullest.

The only area of concern is in Section 6, where the contracted detention facilities currently maintained by the Judicial Branch would be subject to the licensing requirements of C.G.S. Section 17a-145. These facilities are not currently licensed by DCF but are subject to stringent quality assurance review by the Judicial Branch. The current service providers are well regarded and our clients do not complain about conditions. Generally, the organizations that operate these facilities are not regular DCF contractors. Meeting licensing requirements for congregate care facilities for child welfare clients would be unduly burdensome and not result in better conditions of confinement or outcomes for the youth who are currently detained there. Thank you for permitting the Office of Chief Public Defender to provide testimony on this bill.