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**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
MARCH 20, 2017**

**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINE PERRA RAPILLO
DIRECTOR OF DELINQUENCY DEFENSE AND CHILD PROTECTION
OFFICE OF CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER**

RAISED BILL 1025

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE CLOSURE OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE TRAINING
SCHOOL AND THE TRANSFER OF JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO THE JUDICIAL BRANCH**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports *Raised Bill 1025, An Act Concerning the Closure of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and the Transfer of Juvenile Justice Programs and Services From the Department of Children and Families to the Judicial Branch*. This proposal would end admissions to the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) on July 1, 2017 and mandate that all children and youth in DCF custody at CJTS be transferred to a facility run by the Judicial Branch or to a privately contracted facility by January 1, 2018.

This is an important piece of legislation that will finally close the door on the ill conceived juvenile training school. Governor Malloy has announced that he intends to close CJTS in 2018. However, the Department of Children and Families has been slow to produce a plan that would shutter CJTS and replace it with a less correctional model. Action is needed by this legislature to ensure that the facility closes.

CJTS is not designed to promote the rehabilitative goals of the juvenile justice system. The building is modeled after a maximum security prison and over the years, the structure of the facility has promoted a prison mentality. In the nearly 20 years CJTS has been open administrators, superintendents and commissioners have tried to soften the impact of the correctional building and the staff with little success. There have been repeated investigations into the improper use of restraints and seclusion of the young detainees. Recent data shows that the rearrest rate for youth released from CJTS is around 80%. This legislature should act to ensure that CJTS is replaced with a more appropriate set of services immediately.

Raised Bill 1025 would also consolidate juvenile justice programs in the Judicial Branch. Currently, the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch is responsible for pretrial

detention and all probation programs. If the juvenile court determines that an adjudicated child cannot be maintained in the community, the child is committed to the Department of Children and Families. The Office of Chief Public Defender believes that it is time to re-examine this system.

The Harvard Kennedy School prepared a report making recommendations related to Governor Malloy's proposal to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 21. In that report, they made the following statement:

Connecticut should consider unifying all of juvenile corrections (residential facilities for detention and commitment and community supervision) as well as the procurement of a continuum of community-based care into one agency focused exclusively on youth and emerging adults in the juvenile justice system. A newly created youth/emerging adult services agency could focus on the unique needs of this population, the creation of the continuum of care, and small rehabilitative facilities for the few youth who require confinement.¹

The Connecticut juvenile justice system should be consolidated under one entity. The court has been stripped of its ability to order specific placements or services for committed youth. While this agency applauds DCF's efforts to keep children in their communities, the department no longer provides committed delinquency youth with access to rehabilitative services only available through residential care. OCPD Juvenile Post Conviction Unit represents youth who are committed delinquent to DCF. Lawyers in that Unit report that aftercare and reentry services need to be dramatically improved. This could best be done through a unified system that could utilize community probation programs that are already proved to reduce recidivism.² It will be the purview of this legislature to determine if juvenile services should be consolidated under the Judicial Branch or a new agency but the Office of Chief Public Defender supports the concept of a unified juvenile justice agency.

¹ Harvard Kennedy School, *Public Safety and Emerging Adults in Connecticut: Providing effective and developmentally appropriate responses for youth under age 21*. December, 2016

² Report to JJPOC