



*Division of Public Defender Services
State of Connecticut*

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DIRECTOR OF DELINQUENCY DEFENSE & CHILD PROTECTION

**COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
APRIL 3, 2017**

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

**RAISED BILL 6516
AN ACT CONCERNING THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports Raised Bill 6516, **AN ACT CONCERNING THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**. This proposal would appropriate funds to implement the Community Based Diversion System plan created and approved by the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee. It would also provide funding to continue the activity of the University of New Haven to support the JJPOC.

The JJPOC Diversion Workgroup worked for a full year to develop a Community-Based Diversion System Plan. The workgroup consisted of a variety of stakeholders including state agencies, direct service organizations, advocates and more. The plan was crafted in the workgroup and presented to and debated by the full JJPOC in public session. The Office of Chief Public Defender sits on the JJPOC and voted in favor of the plan. This plan is the bedrock needed to meet the goals of the JJPOC. Providing youth and families with increased access to diversionary services will result in a decrease in juvenile incarceration and a reduction in recidivism for youth who enter the court system.

This proposal allocates \$3 million to support implementation of the Community Based Diversion System plan. The plan would utilize the current structure of the youth services bureaus to establish a coordinating hub for services. YSBs are a statutory construct that have existed for 45 years to provide prevention and other services for youth at risk of referral to the juvenile justice system. They are based in municipalities and provide services to local youth but are not consistently resourced throughout the state. Designating the YSBs as the formal hub for diversion programs will help make the services more uniformly available and will allow law enforcement to increase the number of cases that are diverted from court.



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Connecticut has been a national leader in providing alternatives to the juvenile justice system. The successful implementation of “raise the age” was due in large part to the large numbers of 16 and 17 year olds who were diverted out of court and into community based services. Funding this plan makes sense from both a policy and fiscal perspective. Diverting children from the court system has been proven to result in less recidivism and better long term outcomes. Community based diversion will always cost less than a court process, probation supervision or incarceration. The Office of Chief Public Defender asks that this Committee act favorably on this proposal.

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