



# State of Connecticut

## DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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### **Testimony of Christine Perra Rapillo Office of the Chief Public Defender**

#### **Raised Bill 5562: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee**

#### **Committee on the Judiciary March 23, 2018**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports the policy initiatives outlined in Raised Bill 5562: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee. Sections 10-33 contain language that implements the transfer of juvenile justice functions from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to the Judicial Branch's, Court Support Services Division (CSSD) effective July 1, 2018. This is consensus language, worked out by representatives of CSSD and DCF with significant input from the Office of Chief Public Defender and the Office of Chief State's Attorney. There is additional language that will be submitted to the Committee that reflects our latest work product. It is imperative that this language be adopted by the end of the legislative session in order to ensure an orderly transfer of these responsibilities.

Section 1-10 implements the recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee. This proposal would mandate the implementation of the community diversion program authorized by the General Assembly last year that clarifies that a child being released from a juvenile detention center has the right to immediately re-enter his or her school of origin and that school districts designate a liaison to guide that re-entry. These changes are good policy but need to be done in conjunction with the transfer of juvenile justice services from DCF to CSSD. It may be prudent to delay implementation of these changes to allow CSSD to establish their programming.

Sections 7-9 mandate that education for children in “justice system custody” be reorganized under a single state agency. The Office of Chief Public Defender has concerns that creating a school system focused on children in the juvenile justice system will result in adjudicated young people being excluded from regular public school and would urge the committee to consider establishing a more rigorous school reentry program to support success in the youth’s home school.