



# State of Connecticut

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**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN**

**MARCH 6, 2018**

**S.B. No. 323 (RAISED)**

**AN ACT REQUIRING NOTICE PRIOR TO TRANSFER OF A CHILD TO A NEW OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT**

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The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports **S.B. No. 323 – AN ACT REQUIRING NOTICE PRIOR TO THE TRANSFER OF A CHILD TO A NEW OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT** but would offer some helpful amendments to promote the likely intent of the bill.

As written, this bill would amend subsection (d) of section 17a-111b by requiring the Department of Children and Families to provide ten days advance written notice to a child of any placement change following a determination by the court that reasonable efforts to reunify the parent with the child are not required unless an emergency or risk to the child's well-being requires an immediate placement change.

As this Committee is aware, the OCPD oversees the contracts with Assigned Counsel who represent children and parents in child protection proceedings in the juvenile court, and our in-house public defenders are also now representing children in these cases. Accordingly, the OCPD has a vested interest in ensuring that attorneys representing these children have advance written notice of any intended change in a child's placement so they can take whatever action may be necessary in connection with that placement change consistent with the child's wishes.

While the changes included in this bill are helpful, we would propose that this mandated advance written notice of a child's placement change be required for *all* non-emergency placement changes and not just those that follow a "no further reunification efforts" finding pursuant to section 17a-111b. In fact, children in foster care can experience multiple placement changes in cases where no such finding is ever made. In addition, the OCPD would suggest that the written notice be provided to the child's attorney and to any child over the age of twelve years old rather than just to a child of any age. These changes would be consistent with existing DCF policy Section 36-55-15.

The OCPD appreciates this Committee's interest in promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of children, and we'd be happy to work with you and others on any amended language that might help to promote these goals and the intent of this bill.