



State of Connecticut

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**TESTIMONY OF SUSAN I. HAMILTON
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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER**

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 14, 2019**

**H.B. No. 5575
AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSPENSION OF DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS
FOR FIRE STARTING BEHAVIOR TREATMENT**

The Office of the Chief Public Defender (OCPD) **supports HB 5575 – AAC THE SUSPENSION OF DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS FOR FIRE STARTING BEHAVIOR TREATMENT**, which would create a specific diversionary program to treat the unique needs of children in delinquency proceedings involving fire starting behaviors. More specifically, this bill would allow a child in a delinquency case involving fire setting to be evaluated for treatment purposes and would authorize the court to suspend the delinquency proceeding for up to one year to allow the child to participate in such treatment.

Prior to suspending the proceedings, the court must find that the child requires and is likely to benefit from such treatment and that suspension of the proceedings would advance the interests of justice. During the period of suspension, the child would be under the supervision of a juvenile probation officer who would monitor compliance with the program and court orders. If the child successfully completes the treatment program and has complied with all other conditions of the suspension order, the court may dismiss the charges.

This language is similar to the existing diversionary program in Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 46b-133b, which allows the court to suspend delinquency proceedings for a child to receive necessary alcohol or drug dependency treatment. (See, CGS Sec. 46b-133b). Both of these diversionary options promote the goals of

restorative justice and rehabilitation for children involved in our juvenile justice system and allow children to receive necessary treatment services while also being held accountable for their behavior without a resulting delinquency conviction.