



*Written Testimony before the Children's Committee  
Department of Social Services  
February 6, 2025*

Good afternoon, Chairs Maher and Paris, Ranking Members Martinez and Dauphinais; and distinguished members of the Children's Committee. I am Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

I am pleased to offer remarks on Senate Bill 1214.

**SENATE BILL 1214: AN ACT REQUIRING CERTAIN AGENCIES TO REPORT COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.**

This bill requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to submit a report to the General Assembly describing current costs associated with each program serving children and families, as well as anticipated costs associated with using different eligibility criteria for participation in such programs.

DSS has several concerns with the bill as written. First, the administrative work to assemble such a report will require a significant amount of time, requiring additional agency or contracted staffing to conduct this complex programmatic and financial assessment of all the DSS programs that serve children and families and their funding structures. The majority of DSS programs serve children and families, often using income limits that tie to a percentage of the federal poverty level (FPL) depending on household size. Programs often vary in how income is counted, how households are identified, whether assets are permitted, and numerous other eligibility variables that would add to the time and scope required to complete this reporting requirement. Additionally, some DSS programs have federally mandated income limits that cannot be changed. Because conducting the proposed assessments and compiling the information required for the report would be labor intensive, DSS has concerns about having sufficient time and resources to assemble the information and complete the report. Without at least one additional staff person or sufficient funding to contract for such a comprehensive analysis, the Department would not be able to implement this bill as written.

Data indicates that 39% of households in our state have income which falls below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold<sup>1</sup>. ALICE budgets differ by household type and county location, as well as specific household variables, such as the number of adults or children in the household. These different household variables lead to different annual incomes

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<sup>1</sup> <https://alice.ctunitedway.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2024-ALICE-Update-CT-FINAL-2.pdf>

and FPL levels. Were the Department to implement any changes to our programs to bring families above the ALICE threshold, we anticipate there would be a significant fiscal impact.

Recently, DSS has been working to address some of the concerns contemplated by this proposal. For example, DSS has extended HUSKY Health benefits to all children ages 15 and under. Further, to encourage families to save and help them achieve financial security and economic independence, DSS has strengthened the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program by extending the length of time in which families can participate in the program, modifying the criteria for time limit extensions, raising the asset limit, and disregarding higher levels of earned income, as well as other efforts to strengthen and modernize the program. Additionally, DSS raised the gross income limit in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from 185% to 200% FPL and developed and launched the innovative Covered CT program to extend no-cost health coverage to adults up to 175% FPL, including for parents and caretakers of dependent children. These program expansions and improvements have increased the services the Department is able to provide.

Given the expansions in coverage and services that have recently been adopted and that are in progress, the significant complexity and corresponding cost in time and resources needed to conduct the work proposed in the bill, and the significant financial resources that would be required to implement large expansions in program eligibility, the Department cannot support this bill at this time.