



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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**Testimony of the Office of Chief Public Defender
Renee Cimino, Director of Delinquency Defense and Child Protection
Chris Oakley, Assistant Public Defender**

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN- FEBRUARY 20, 2025

Raised Bill No. 1311

AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports S.B. 1311, Section 2, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Department of Children and Families. The legislation would codify the existing Department of Children and Families' policy that permits certain youth to voluntarily re-enter care after attaining the age of eighteen. The office takes no position on the remainder of the bill.

Youth adjudicated abused, neglected or uncared for and committed to the care and custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) are eligible at age eighteen to voluntarily consent to remain in care up to age twenty-three. Occasionally, committed young adults decline to consent to remain care or voluntarily enroll and then subsequently disenroll prior to age twenty-one. If these young adults decide that they are not yet ready to make the transition to full independence, S.B. 1311 allows them to request re-entry into the care of DCF up to age twenty-one.

Young adults request to re-enter into the care of DCF for a variety of reasons including abandonment, Human Trafficking, domestic violence and/or specialized needs. The young adult subject to these conditions may have reached maturity to remove themselves from the situation for self-preservation but find themselves without any support or housing.

DCF voluntary re-entry services would provide these vulnerable young adults with housing, post-secondary education and voluntary continuation of care services by the Department of Children and Families up to age twenty-three.

In addition, the Department of Children and Families Commissioner's written testimony in support of section 2 of S.B. 1311, indicates that by codifying the existing re-entry policy "It is expected that the Department could recover about \$1 million in federal reimbursement based on past averages."

Thus, the codification of the existing DCF policy would have a significant positive impact on DCF and those eligible youth who re-enter into their care.

Thank you for your consideration of this office's position on Section 2 of this bill. If any questions, this office remains available to discuss this further and requests that this bill be voted favorably out of the committee.