



**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**

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE - MARCH 19, 2025**

**Raised Bill No. 1511**  
**AN ACT CONCERNING DISCONNECTED YOUTH**

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports *S.B. 1511, An Act Concerning Disconnected Youth*. This legislation is designed to reduce Connecticut's disconnected youth population through a variety of strategies. These include expanding data collection and employment opportunities and establishing youth success oversight boards and school-based mental health services.

Disconnected youth and young people are individuals between the age of fourteen to twenty-six, who are not engaged in school, work or developing a skill to improve employment opportunities. Common risk factors that lead to youth disconnection include unstable housing, poverty, disabilities and involvement in foster care and/or juvenile and criminal justice systems. These young people often face heightened risks of poor mental health, including increased vulnerability to violence, substance abuse, and social-emotional challenges.

S.B. 1511 expands Connecticut's statewide data collection network on disconnected young people by requiring participation from the Department of Corrections and Court Support Services. Including the juvenile and criminal justice population in this network allows participating agencies to collaborate to identify and coordinate services for all disconnected young people in Connecticut.

In addition, S.B. 1511's establishment of youth success oversight boards, school-based mental health services and employment opportunities will provide disconnected young people with the services, support and opportunities to reconnect to education and employment pathways.

This office thanks the Committee for raising this important legislation and respectfully requests a joint favorable report.