

Testimony in Support of SB 304,
AAC Reporting Requirements for the Commissioners of Social Services and Children
and Families
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Dear Senator Harris, Representative Villano, Members of the Human Services
Committee:

Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well being of Connecticut's children, youth and families. We submit this testimony in support of SB 304, *AAC Reporting Requirements for the Commissioners of Social Service and Children and Families*, on behalf of Voices' sister lobbying organization – Advocates for Connecticut's Children and Youth (ACCY), a statewide, independent, citizen-based organization dedicated to speaking up for children, youth and families.

The General Assembly is, quite appropriately, focusing increased attention on measuring the actual impact our public investment has through its Results-Based Accountability efforts. This proposed bill addresses one type of challenge that this effort faces -- understanding more completely how federal funds are being used by the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Social Services. The proposed bill represents an important step towards greater budget transparency.

In SFY 07, DCF is projected to spend about \$22.36 million in federal funds on various programs and services and DSS about \$361.53 million (apart from federal reimbursements). In marked contrast to each agency's General Fund spending, however, the public and members of the General Assembly have little detail about precisely how these funds are being used. While the Governor's proposed budget *does* identify the names of the various federal funding sources (e.g., "Social Services Block Grant," "Chafee Foster Care Independence Act"), it provides no detail about precisely which programs and services are receiving federal funds and in what amounts – to supplement their General Fund appropriations.

The impact of *not* knowing how precisely how federal funds are being used is significant when trying to assess the short and longer-term impacts of public investment, because we only know *part* of the public investment being made – the General Fund appropriations.

For example, current mentoring programs may appear to provide a good return on our General Fund investment in terms of reduced truancy and delinquent behavior, but if one learns that each mentoring program additionally receives federal funds that are double their annual General Fund appropriation, the net return on investment may not be so sound.

Simply put, one cannot accurately measure the return on public investment if one only knows details about *part* of what state government has been investing in programs and services.

For this reason, we would respectfully recommend that this bill be amended to broaden its scope, and require that any state agency that receives and spends federal funds, private funds, and/or special, non-lapsing funds produce an annual report for the General Assembly that details the specific purposes for which all such funds are being used, and the specific amount of funds being used for such purpose. Ideally, this report should detail the allocation of federal, private, and special, non-lapsing funds using the same budget categories as are used to identify how General Fund (and Special Transportation Fund) appropriations are used, so that cumulative totals can be generated.

In this way, members of the General Assembly, and the public, will better understand how *all* funds are being spent through our state budget.