CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

53 Oak Street, Suite 15
Hartford, CT 06106
Voice: 860-548-1661
Fax: 860-548-1783
www.ctkidslink.org

Testimony Concerning
SB 176, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Study of State Planning

Shelley Geballe, JD, MPH
Program Review and Investigations Committee Public Hearing
February 29, 2008

Dear Senator Meyer, Rep. Wasserman, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am President of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth and families.

CT Voices first wants to *thank* the Committee for doing this study of such an important – yet seemingly overlooked – topic. As an organization that focuses on improving outcomes for children and youth, we think is imperative that Connecticut have a long-term planning process in place. Without it, the state risks making decisions with seeming short-term benefit that would impose longer-term costs on our next generations. Conversely, the state also risks failing to seize emerging opportunities for public investment that could enhance the long-term well-being of Connecticut because of their short-term costs. The Committee's study of the short-comings in Connecticut's current planning (e.g., planning in silos, inadequate data and planning infrastructure) and of models in other states that excel in this area has done much to move this discussion forwarded.

For these reasons, CT Voices enthusiastically supports the recommendations in SB 176 as they would begin to create an *enduring* structure within state government focused on development of a long-term vision for Connecticut, analyses of the state and its core services, and a mechanism for setting goals and long-term objectives for the state, and then measuring progress toward achieving them. We would respectfully suggest, however, several additions to the bill as follows:

- Section 1 (b): Add some additional detail, as included in the Report's recommendations, about enhancing staffing within OPM, including the areas of expertise for the additional staff that needs to be hired to assist in this planning. *Add* a requirement that OPM staffing include several economists charged with linking long-term demographic and economic trends to emerging economic development opportunities and analyzing Connecticut's current economic development efforts for their continued cost-effectiveness.
- Section 1(c): Amend to say: "The council shall be responsible for developing *and implementing*….
- That Connecticut establish an Institute (like the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute) that includes not only the current State Data Center at the University of Connecticut, but the other academic resources in Connecticut's higher education institutions that could support the Council on Connecticut's Future (e.g., through independent economic analyses, scenario planning, and program evaluations). Linking these various resources through a coordinating "Institute" administrative structure could expedite the exchange of the Council's requests for assistance to the universities, and the sharing of policy-relevant information from the universities with the Council.