

**Testimony Regarding the Governor's Proposed Changes to the Budget for the Judicial Department in SFY 2019**

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Good evening Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dr. Lauren Ruth, and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Governor's proposed changes to the Judicial Department's budget in SFY 2019.

**The Legislature took two steps last year to change the way that justice-involved youth receive services.**

First, the Legislature voted to close the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS), which provides correctional services for boys who have a history of convictions,<sup>1</sup> by July of 2018. In addition, the Legislature voted to move children committed delinquent from the primary care of the Department of Children and Families (DCF),<sup>2</sup> to the primary care of the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Department beginning in July of 2018. Sections 321-323 of the bipartisan budget requires CSSD to create appropriately secure housing for these high-risk youth and expand contracted juvenile justice services to include a "comprehensive system of graduated responses with an array of services, sanctions, and secure placements available for...use to provide individualized supervision, care, accountability, and treatment to any child convicted as delinquent."<sup>3</sup>

Last year's changes did not constitute a comprehensive plan for how state agencies should handle this transition. Budget adjustments this year will impact the way that this transition is implemented, and thus impact the well-being and rehabilitation of some of our most vulnerable youth.

**The Governor's proposed changes to CSSD's Juvenile Justice Outreach and Residential Board and Care line items will leave CSSD unable to achieve their legislative mandate to create a comprehensive system that appropriately serves high-risk youth.**

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<sup>1</sup> Rabe Thomas, Jacqueline. (2015, 30 September). "The state of Connecticut juvenile incarceration in 17 carts." *The CT Mirror*. Available at: <https://ctmirror.org/2015/09/30/juvenile-justice-in-ct-in-17-charts/>

<sup>2</sup> DCF is the integrated child-serving department responsible for responding to child maltreatment and providing services to prevent maltreatment and respond to children's behavioral health needs.

<sup>3</sup> CT Public Act 17-2. Retrieved from: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2017/BA/2017SB-01502-R00SS1-BA.htm>

The Office of Fiscal Analysis estimated that CSSD would need \$13 million to establish residential care for the youth served at CJTS.<sup>4</sup> This \$13 million is already a large savings from the cost of running CJTS and Pueblo, which cost the state an estimated \$32 million in FY 2016.<sup>5</sup> The SFY 2018-2019 budget only appropriated \$6.56 million for CSSD to create and fund these secure facilities in SFY 2019, and after accounting for lapsed funds, the Governor's proposal leaves CSSD \$6.29 million for these beds. Furthermore, the SFY 2018-2019 budget appropriated \$11.15 million to CSSD to create a graduated array of services so that CSSD could provide individualized care and treatment for high-risk youth. The Governor's budget revisions propose moving \$7.29 million of this money *out* of CSSD's budget and placing \$6.71 million of those funds back into DCF's budget to account for the fact that many services funded through this line item were not being primarily used by adjudicated youth. This transfer would leave CSSD with just \$3.86 million to establish an array of services which currently cost DCF over \$4 million a year.

CSSD already manages the majority of services and supports for children with juvenile justice involvement,<sup>6</sup> so moving the high-risk children served at CJTS may improve the efficiency of the juvenile justice system and in so doing save money over time. There is no evidence to suggest that such savings are possible while implementing a large-scale system shift, so these reductions risk underfunding vital services. CSSD has many efficient systems, procedures, and services that they can leverage in creating a continuum of care, but in 2018 and 2019 they must expand their contracts to meet the needs of high-risk youth, build or contract secure facilities, and accept the daily cost of caring for and educating more children in their care.

**Justice-involved children and families are often also involved in the child welfare system and the behavioral health system; funding and implementation of these systems should be holistic to achieve the greatest effects.**

All too often, the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system serve the same children and families.<sup>7</sup> These are children who often come from impoverished homes, have a history of multiple traumas, and overwhelmingly experience educational and behavioral health challenges.<sup>8</sup> Aspects of the child welfare system, such as experiencing frequent placement changes, increase the risk that children will also become involved in the juvenile justice system. Although moving justice-involved youth to CSSD may improve the state's financial efficiency in the short-term, we risk losing the holistic, wraparound care for children and families that is needed to break the cycle of crossover involvement and produce better outcomes for the next generation of children in Connecticut.

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<sup>4</sup> CT Office of Fiscal Analysis. (2017, 24 April). "Fiscal Note sSB-1025". Retrieved from: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2017/FN/2017SB-01025-R000698-FN.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Connecticut Juvenile Training School Advisory Board. (2016, February). "Report to the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families." Available at: <http://www.portal.ct.gov/DCF/Data-Connect/Data-Connect-Homepage/DCF-Data-Reports>

<sup>6</sup> Bracey, Jeana R., Jeffrey J. Vanderploeg, Manu Singh-Looney, and Tianna Hill. (2015, December). "Improving Coordination between the Juvenile Justice and Behavioral Health Systems in Connecticut." *Report prepared by the Child Health and Development Institute of CT, Inc. and submitted to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee*. Retrieved from: [https://www.cga.ct.gov/app/tfs%5C20141215\\_Juvenile%20Justice%20Policy%20and%20Oversight%20Committee%5C20160128/Final%20Report%20by%20CHDI%20on%20the%20overlap%20of%20the%20mental%20health%20and%20juvenile%20justice%20systems.pdf](https://www.cga.ct.gov/app/tfs%5C20141215_Juvenile%20Justice%20Policy%20and%20Oversight%20Committee%5C20160128/Final%20Report%20by%20CHDI%20on%20the%20overlap%20of%20the%20mental%20health%20and%20juvenile%20justice%20systems.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Luczak, Stephanie, Nicole Updegrave, and Lauren Ruth. (2018, January). "Between People and Places: Reducing Upheaval for Children Moving Around in Connecticut Foster Care." Connecticut Voices for Children. Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/youthonthemove>

<sup>8</sup> Goldstein, Brian. (2012, November). "Crossover Youth: The Intersection of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice." Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. Retrieved from: <https://jjie.org/2012/11/15/crossover-youth-intersection-of-child-welfare-juvenile-justice/>

For context, a breakdown of the Juvenile Justice Outreach Services contracts shows that were CSSD only to continue the contracts within that line item that were primarily used by adjudicated youth—including the Fostering Responsibility, Education and Employment (F.R.E.E.) program, the Community Reentry Pilot Program, Re-Entry and Family Treatment, and Career Enhancement Training—CSSD would need over \$4 million in funding.<sup>9</sup> If CSSD only continues to fund these programs, youth in their care may no longer be able to access Multisystemic Therapy or Functional Family Therapy, which are currently available to all youth under DCF care. Both cognitive behavioral therapies that are highly effective for reducing recidivism<sup>10, 11</sup> and have strong returns on investment.<sup>12, 13</sup> High-risk youth also might not be able to access services like Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach substance abuse treatment or the Edgenuity JJ reading program, programs paid for through the Juvenile Justice Outreach Services line item but that served no justice-involved youth in SFY 2017. DCF needed funding from the Juvenile Justice Outreach Services line item because the majority of the children receiving these and other services were not justice-involved. However, many of these programs also greatly benefit justice-involved youth, and *should* be made available to these youths.

We cannot treat the juvenile justice and child welfare systems as either-or as the Governor's transfer of money from CSSD to DCF implies. Rather, the Legislature should commit to funding *both* of these systems at levels adequate to provide high-quality, effective care. Adequate funding as well as true collaboration and coordination amongst branches of government and state agencies are both necessary to promoting more positive outcomes for children and families and helping these children and families to have a lesser need for support from state agencies in the future.

Connecticut Voices for Children recognizes that the Legislature as a whole, but particularly the members of the Appropriations Committee, must make numerous hard decisions in responding to Connecticut's fiscal crisis. Compromising the health and wellbeing of children and families cannot be among those hard decisions, so we have provided a number of recommendations for raising the revenue needed to fund CSSD creating a continuum of care for children committed delinquent.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment on the Governor's proposed changes to the SFY 2019 budget and to propose a better way to serve the needs of justice-involved youth. I am happy to answer any questions and can be reached at [lruth@ctvoices.org](mailto:lruth@ctvoices.org) or (203)498-4240 x 112.

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<sup>9</sup> Information on the breakdown of DCF programs serving JJ involved kids and the breakdown of the percent of children served by each program who are JJ-involved and non-JJ involved and the funding associated with it shared by DCF with the Alliance of Community Nonprofits and available upon request.

<sup>10</sup> The Council of State Governments Justice Center (2015). "*Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Young Adults in the Juvenile and Adult Criminal Justice Systems*." Retrieved from: <https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Transitional-Age-Brief.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Sexton, Thomas and Charles W. Turner. (2010, June). "The Effectiveness of Functional Family Therapy for Youth with Behavioral Problems in a Community Practice Setting." *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(3). 339-348. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4172308/>

<sup>12</sup> Pennsylvania saved \$2.17 for every dollar invested in FFT for JJ-involved youth. Evidence-Based Prevention & Intervention Support Center. "Return-on-Investment for Three Years of Multisystemic Therapy in Pennsylvania." *EPI Center at Pennsylvania State University*. Retrieved from: <http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/sites/default/files/ebp/MST-Three-Year-Report-ROI.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Pennsylvania saved \$7.66 for every dollar invested in FFT for JJ-involved youth. Evidence-Based Prevention & Intervention Support Center. "Return-on-Investment for Three Years of Functional Family Therapy in Pennsylvania." *EPI Center at Pennsylvania State University*. Retrieved from: <http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/sites/default/files/ebp/FFT-Three-Year-Report-ROI.pdf>