

## Testimony Regarding H.B. 5564: An Act Concerning the Closure of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School

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Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, Representative Rebimbas and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am submitting this written testimony 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 this opportunity to provide testimony regarding H.B. 5564: An Act Concerning the Closure of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School.

We appreciate the intent of this bill, which is to provide legislative support for the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Department and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as they move toward closing the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) and transferring care of the children housed at CJTS from DCF to CSSD. It is crucial that these departments work together in a planful manner to ensure that CJTS can close by July 1, 2018<sup>1</sup> and to provide the effected children with continuous, secure housing and an appropriate continuum of services.

In order for Connecticut to continue reducing juvenile incarceration, improve public safety, and effectively support youth with complex needs, we urge policymakers to ensure that appropriate, therapeutic, and rehabilitative alternative programs and placements are in place to meet the needs of each youth currently residing at these facilities in advance of their closure. This transition will require assessing the individual needs of youth currently receiving services at CJTS, establishing community-based secure housing facilities through a transparent Request for Proposal process, and adequately funding CSSD so that it can expand the services it provides. We are concerned that the Governor's proposed budget revisions for 2019 do not provide adequate funding for the Judicial Department to create an appropriate continuum of care.<sup>2</sup>

Incarceration is expensive; so, reducing incarceration and increasing diversion promises to save the state money in the long-term.<sup>3</sup> Through the combination of reduced court costs, reduced youth

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 321-323 of PA 17-2 require that the courts commit delinquent children to CSSD rather than DCF beginning July 1, 2018 and that CSSD create an array of services and secure placement.

<sup>2</sup> Noonan, Ray, Lauren Ruth, Ellen Shemitz, Karen Siegel, Camara Stokes Hudson, Nicole Updegrave, and Jane McNichol. (February, 2018). "Impact of the Governor's FY 2019 Budget Adjustments on Children and Families." *Connecticut Voices for Children*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/Impact%20of%20the%20Final%20FY%2018-19%20Budget%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ruth, Lauren K. (February 20, 2018). "Testimony regarding the Governor's proposed changes to the Judicial Department in SFY 2019." *Connecticut Voices for Children*. Retrieved from:

living expenses that must be paid by the state, and increased youth productivity after offending youth receive treatment, some diversion treatment programs can save over \$13 for every dollar spent by the state.<sup>4</sup> However, closing CJTS without establishing and funding alternative services will not provide public safety returns or economic returns. We recognize that CSSD and DCF have had more than two years to create a plan,<sup>5</sup> and we ask that the legislature provide the oversight, support, and resources necessary to make the closing of CJTS a successful step in Connecticut's efforts to reduce the incarceration of children.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback regarding H.B. 5664. 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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<http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/Ruth%20Testimony%20Submitted%20to%20Appropriations%20Committee%20February%2019%202018%20Re%20Judicial%20Budget.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Petteruti, Amanda, Nastassia Walsh, & Tracy Velazquez. (May, 2009). "The costs of confinement: Why good juvenile justice policies make good fiscal sense." *The Justice Policy Institute*. Retrieved from:

[http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09\\_05\\_rep\\_costsofconfinement\\_jj\\_ps.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_rep_costsofconfinement_jj_ps.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Nalpathanchil, Lucy. (December 9, 2015). "Malloy targets mid-2018 for closing juvenile training school." *The CT Mirror*. Retrieved from: <https://ctmirror.org/2015/12/09/malloy-targets-mid-2018-for-closing-juvenile-training-school/>