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State of Connecticut

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Committee on Human Services
February 16, 2021

Raised S.B. 854 (LCO 2676): AAC A List Of The 100 Most Delinquent Child Support Obligor

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Raised Senate Bill 854: An Act Concerning A List Of The 100 Most Delinquent Child Support Obligor.

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports this legislation to reflect best practices in strengthening families, collecting child support, and avoiding counterproductive shaming and stigmatization.

Attorneys within, as well as under contract with, the Division of Public Defender Services work in every judicial district across the state representing indigent obligors facing civil contempt charges before the Family and Family Support Magistrate Divisions of the Connecticut Superior Court. Because civil contempt in such matters carries the threat of incarceration to coerce compliance with a court order, such obligors have the constitutional right to counsel.

We are grateful to Governor Lamont and Department of Social Services Commissioner Gifford for proposing this legislation, and we concur with the reasoning set forth in Commissioner Gifford's testimony – especially that “the requirement is antithetical to the Department’s modern approach to operating the IV-D program,” and that the goal should be “to encourage fathers [and mothers] to participate in their children’s lives and upbringing, rather than shaming or threatening [parents] into a role of responsibility, which experience has demonstrated often drives a wedge between families and can actually reduce child support collections.”¹

When the House and Senate established the list/publication mandate of C.G.S. 17b-179(l) by way of House Bill 5526 (Public Act 14-177) on May 7, 2014, the votes were unanimous. But since that time, society and our state government have reached better understandings of what works to strengthen family connections and collect child support. Additionally, as attorneys familiar with the system, we are keenly aware that factors and decisions beyond obligors’ control often influence the affordability and accrual of child support obligations.²

S.B. 854 not only acknowledges legal and logistical concerns with the current law, but also reflects the more modern understanding of how best to pursue the holistic mission of ensuring that children and youths have the familial and financial support they need to thrive.

Thank you for considering our perspective. We encourage members to support this legislation.

¹ “Testimony before the Human Services Committee,” CT DSS Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, Feb. 16, 2021.

² See “Testimony submitted by Lucy Potter, Attorney, Greater Hartford Legal Aid,” Lucy Potter, Feb. 16, 2021.