



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel Office of Chief Public Defender

Judiciary Committee - March 25, 2022

Raised S.B. No. 444 - An Act Concerning a Study of the Civil Laws of this State
Raised H.B. 5469 - An Act Concerning a Study of the Civil Procedure Laws of this State

Mission Statement of the Division of Public Defender Services

Striving to ensure justice and a fair and unbiased system, the Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services zealously promotes and protects the rights, liberty and dignity of all clients entrusted to us. We are committed to holistic representation that recognizes clients as individuals, fosters trust and prevents unnecessary and wrongful convictions.

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports *S.B. 444, An Act Concerning a Study of the Civil Laws of this State* and *H.B. 5469, An Act Concerning a Study of the Civil Procedure Laws of this State*. OCPD requests that the Chief Public Defender be added to the membership of both groups as they carry out their charge to study the civil laws and civil procedures of this state. OCPD requests your consideration of including the Division of Criminal Justice in the membership of both groups as well.

Pursuant to C.G.S. 51-296, the Division of Public Defender Services, as a state agency, provides:

“(A) Legal services and guardians ad litem to children, youths and indigent respondents in family relations matters in which the state has been ordered to pay the cost of such legal services and guardians ad litem, provided legal services shall be provided to

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indigent respondents pursuant to this subparagraph only in paternity proceedings and contempt proceedings; and (B) legal services and guardians ad litem to children, youths and indigent legal parties in proceedings before the superior court for juvenile matters.”

This provision is in addition to its mandate to provide legal representation to indigent adults and juveniles in any criminal action or delinquency matter, or in extradition or habeas corpus proceedings which arise out of a conviction. OCPD’s substantial experience in the Connecticut courts gives this agency a unique perspective on Connecticut’s civil laws and procedures.

In addition, OCPD’s viewpoint can provide insight into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to the courts, dockets, and those areas where change is needed. For these reasons, OCPD supports the bill and requests that it be included in these groups.