



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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Testimony of Office of Chief Public Defender Renee Cimino, Director of Delinquency Defense and Child Protection

S.B 156 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE VOLUNTARY SURRENDER OF INFANTS

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN- FEBRUARY 17, 2026

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports *S.B. 156, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study the Voluntary Surrender of Infants*. The proposed legislation would establish a task force to study the voluntary surrender of infants in this state with an emphasis on the ways in which such provisions, policies, and procedures may create or perpetuate racial, ethnic, health, economic, and socioeconomic disparities among parents who engage in such voluntary surrender. While in support, however, OCPD believes that it is important that the Chief Public Defender be included on the task force.

The Division of Public Defender Services (DPDS) is the only state agency which provides representation for indigent parents and children when abuse, neglect, and termination of parental rights petitions are filed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and when children and adults have been arrested and charged with delinquency or criminal offenses. In both roles, DPDS supports a safe and legal option for parents in crisis, at any age, to relinquish newborns without fear of prosecution. As a member of the task force, the expertise of the Chief Public Defender in these areas will allow for valuable input in recommending policies and procedures for parents who engage in voluntary surrender.

Thank you for your consideration of OCPD's position on this bill. In conclusion, this office requests that the Chief Public Defender be added to the membership of the task force and that then this bill be voted favorably out of the Committee.