



## State of Connecticut

### DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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

#### JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - MARCH 20, 2026

#### Raised Bill No. 475

#### AN ACT CONCERNING JUDICIAL BRANCH OPERATIONS

While taking no position on the majority of **R.B. 475, An Act Concerning Judicial Branch Operations**, the Office of Chief Public Defender has concerns with **Sections 5, 8, 12 and 14**. This office has met with and will continue its discussions with the Judicial Branch on these concerns. In addition, *this office has proposed substitute language for Sections 5 and 14, a solution for Section 8; and that Section 12 be stricken from the bill.*

**Section 5** - This Section would amend subsection (c) of C.G.S. 46b-38c to permit certain employees of the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch (currently referenced in the statute as the Judicial Department) to further disclose certain information to employees of the Department of Children and Families. It is already permissible for the sharing of certain information to the court, the prosecuting authority, law enforcement agencies, probation officers, and mandated reporters. The Office of Chief Public Defender asks that counsel of record be added to the list of persons and entities that records and information are shared with under this statute. This office respectfully requests the insertion of the following information as a new section (G) after line 210:

“(G) Notwithstanding the provisions of this statute, any information disclosed pursuant to this statute to any agency, employee or entity shall simultaneously be disclosed to counsel of record for the defendant in the proceeding.”

**Section 8** - This office is concerned with **Section 8**, as the proposal removes the ability for an incarcerated parent to acknowledge paternity when at court. Due to being incarcerated, the incarcerated parent is unable to travel to a local Department of Social Services Child Support

office or to the Department of Public Health Office of Vital records, as contemplated here, to sign an acknowledgment of parentage. Changing the current process will require the court to order a paternity test and await the result, which can take months prior to the adjudication of the matter by the court. As a result, since certain rights do not attach until paternity is established, the rights of the parents and the child may be infringed.

This office will continue to speak with the Judicial Branch to ascertain if there is a creative solution to this issue. We have raised the question of whether a Department of Public Health official could visit the incarcerated individual to sign the Acknowledgement of Parentage in these limited circumstances. If possible, this office believes that this would resolve the issue.

**This office will continue its discussions with the Judicial Branch and reach out to the Department of Public Health in an attempt to resolve this issue.**

**Section 12** - Current law requires the court to refer a person to the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) for confirmation of eligibility and an assessment of the mental health condition of the person. Pursuant to this proposal, **Section 12** requires that *if a referred person resides outside of Connecticut, they must return to Connecticut for the confirmation of eligibility and an assessment of the mental health condition of the person.* This office **strongly opposes** this, as it will **substantially impact upon indigent persons who may now reside outside of Connecticut and do not have the financial resources to comply** with this new requirement to return to Connecticut.

As a result, this office asks the Committee to **strike Section 12** from the bill.

**Section 14** - Lastly, this office proposes the insertion of "**juvenile probation**" in line 1174 as follows to clarify the type of risk and needs assessment that the court may order:

1173 committed the acts alleged, the court may [consider if the child should  
1174 be assessed for services] order a juvenile probation risk and needs assessment to  
determine  
1175 whether the child could benefit from services. Any such risk and needs  
1176 assessment shall be subject to the protections of subsection (k) of section  
1177 46b-124. Such assessment shall be held not later than two weeks after . . .

The Office of Chief Public Defender thanks the Judicial Branch for meeting with this office to discuss these concerns, and we look forward to continuing these discussions. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony as you move forward with this legislation.