



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

Office of Chief Public Defender
55 Farmington Avenue, 8th Floor
Hartford, Connecticut 06105
(860) 509-6405 Telephone
(860) 509-6495 Fax

Deborah Del Prete Sullivan
Legal Counsel, Director
deborah.d.sullivan@pds.ct.gov

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

H.B 5476 - AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF EFFORTS TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT- MARCH 10, 2026

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports *H.B. 5476, An Act Concerning Oversight of Efforts to Prevent Human Trafficking*. However, OCPD requests that in **Section 8, OCPD be included as a member** of the Human Trafficking Prevention and Response Task Force.

Section 8. This office *requests the Chief Public Defender be added to the membership of the Human Trafficking Prevention and Response Task Force*. Human trafficking victims often face criminal arrest and conviction for crimes they were forced to commit by their traffickers. Failure to recognize signs of human trafficking by authorities leaves victims vulnerable to further exploitation and abuse, and it exposes them to harsh penalties and consequences of the criminal justice and child welfare systems.¹

The Division of Public Defender Services (DPDS) is the only state agency which provides representation for all 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 represents victims of trafficking who have been charged with crimes they were forced to commit by their traffickers.

¹ <https://ctmirror.org/2025/05/06/ct-human-trafficking-response-system-report/>

While OCPD supports the creation of the Human Trafficking and Response Task Force, it is vital to the success of the task force that the specific needs of this vulnerable population be represented. 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 to identify systemic gaps and develop policy recommendations to the Trafficking in Persons Council, of which we are a member.

Thank you for your consideration of OCPD's position on this bill. **With the suggested changes proposed by this Office to Section 8, OCPD requests that the Committee vote favorably on this bill.**