



February 19, 2020

Dear Representative Abercrombie, Senator Moore, Senator Somers, and Representative Case & distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Barbara Lockhart and I have been an active Board Member of the Connecticut Youth Services Association for over 22 years. I served the board as the New London County Chapter Representative, the Vice President, the President, and now hold the position of Advocacy Chair. I am also the Director of the Youth Service Bureau in The Town of Montville, and currently serve as the Juvenile Review Board Case Manager.

This year YSBs find ourselves in a unique position, as it is our first year back under the prevue of the Department of Children and Families since 1995! To date things have gone really well in terms of both communication and support.

First and foremost, and I believe I can speak on behalf of all of Connecticut's 102 Youth Service Bureaus; CYSA wishes to thank the Governor for leaving both YSB line items whole in his 2021 budget proposal! Additionally we are incredibly grateful for the increase in the YSB Enhancement line item last year and the allocation of increased funding for Juvenile Review Boards We have learned, in over 48 years of serving Connecticut's communities, that investing on the front end, and re-investing in what we know works, creates a strong recipe for positive and successful outcomes for kids and families, and clearly both the Governor and the legislature agree!

Connecticut General Statute (10-19m) states that YSBs shall be the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment, and follow up services for children, youth, and families. With over 22 plus years of experience in the YSB field I can speak first-

hand about the benefits of diversion practices, increased youth and family engagement, the importance of a caring community agency, and the reward of positive outcomes when we invest and reinvest wisely, fiscally, educationally, and socially. YSBs are the state's strongest example of a grass roots, boots on the ground practice & success!

The ever growing presence of Youth Service Bureaus in the realm of juvenile justice and diversion work is yielding positive results. The most recent state report card data supports this claim. YSBs practice of an "on the ground" direct service approach for youth and families who have become involved in both delinquency and non-judicial situations, which makes youth service bureaus both unique and familiar as a community resource for guidance, understanding and assistance. The comfort and familiarity which children, youth, and families share with their local YSBs is reflective of mutual respect, and has a long and positive history. Thank you so much for your time this evening.

Respectfully submitted: *Barbara A. Lockhart, MS*