



Public Health Committee
March 28, 2021
Via Email: phtestimony@cga.ct.gov

**HB 6666 An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations
Regarding Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes
Support**

**Testimony of Patricia Julianelle, Senior Strategist for Program Advancement and
Legal Affairs, SchoolHouse Connection**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of SchoolHouse Connection, a national organization promoting success for children and youth experiencing homelessness, from birth through higher education. We support state policy advocacy to assist youth experiencing homelessness across the country.

I write today in strong support of Sections 70-72 of HB 6666, which would bring Connecticut in line with an increasing number of states enacting measures to ensure young people experiencing homelessness can access birth certificates and IDs. Youth experiencing homelessness are extremely vulnerable to sex and labor trafficking and chronic illness. 70% of homeless youth report experiencing some form of violence, 32% of which includes sexual assault.ⁱ 40% of homeless youth are victims of sex trafficking at least once in a single year.ⁱⁱ These young people desperately need employment, housing, and other services to stay safe and work toward independence.

Tragically, despite their best efforts, homeless youth often cannot access help because they lack basic documents like birth certificates and photo IDs. Without these vital documents, youth cannot secure employment or enroll in postsecondary education and training programs. They often cannot access housing programs or other supportive services. They are stymied in their efforts to work toward independence and leave their homelessness behind, permanently.

The revisions in Sections 70-72 of HB 6666 will remove this barrier to safety and stability by allowing youth and young adults aged 15-24 experiencing homelessness, as verified by their school or a provider, to obtain a copy of their birth certificate and a state ID for free.

The revisions also specify a definition of homelessness consistent with Subtitle VII-B of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. In Connecticut, only 15.6% of youth experiencing homelessness live in a homeless shelter. According to school district data, 72.8% of young people experiencing homelessness in Connecticut are staying temporarily with others due to eviction, other loss of housing, and severe economic hardship. There is not nearly enough shelter space in Connecticut to accommodate the number of homeless children and youth in the state. With an anticipated increase in homelessness as COVID-19 eviction moratoria and other protections end later this year, even more youth are likely to be experiencing homelessness outside the shelter system. HB 6666's revisions to current law will ensure that all youth experiencing homelessness can access their basic vital documents, regardless of where they lay their head on a particular night.

We have worked with several states on legislation similar to Sections 70-72 of HB 6666. Just over the past two years, SchoolHouse Connection has worked with state legislatures in Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, Nevada, Tennessee, and Utah to pass similar bills.ⁱⁱⁱ Facilitating access to these vital documents is an extremely low-cost way to provide key support to homeless youth and young adults who are striving to work, study, and find independence and stability.

I strongly urge you to support Sections 70-72 of HB 6666, to advance safety and independence for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in Connecticut.

Respectfully,



Patricia Julianelle
Senior Strategist for Program Advancement and Legal Affairs

ⁱ Kipke, et al. (1997). "Street youth, their peer group affiliation and differences according to residential status, subsistence patterns, and use of services." *Adolescence*, 32(127): 655-669.

ⁱⁱ University of Louisville (2016). *Youth Experiences Survey*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Indiana [SB 464](#) (2019); Kentucky [HB 378](#) (2019); New Mexico HB 179 (2021); Nevada [AB 363](#) (2019); Tennessee [SB 2591](#) (2018); Utah [HB 371](#) (2019).