



**Appropriations Committee, February 26, 2021
Testimony Regarding Judicial FY '22 and '23 Branch Budget**

Good afternoon Chairman Walker, Chairman Osten, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ron Nelson. I am president of AFSCME Local 749 which represents over 1,200 workers in the Judicial Branch. I also serve as a juvenile detention officer.

We urge you to provide adequate staffing, funding and training for the Judicial Branch. Governors have not provided enough funding over the years to keep the branch staffing at needed levels over the years. Branch employees have performed very well despite inadequate funding, rising to meet the occasion despite short staffing. This has been very apparent during the challenges that have come with the Covid epidemic.

A concern raised by the Covid epidemic, is that of placing too many members of the public and staff in a reduced number of operating courthouses. This has the effect of making social distancing impossible. This imperils staff and the public. Please fund an adequate infrastructure, allowing for appropriate space needs for a fully functioning Judicial Branch.

We are proud of the work that we do as Branch employees. I am honored to serve my colleagues who amaze me every day with the care and concern that they show the public, and particularly our state's youth in the CSSD division.

We thank the General Assembly for a few years ago passing a law (C.G.S. 4-73(g)) that states that the Office of Policy and Management must present the Judicial Branch's budget request as submitted. Our understanding is that this law is still not complied with. This seems to fly in the face of our three equal branches of government construct. We urge you to consider the Branch's budget request, apart from that submitted by OPM. It is stunning to us that while the Branch has offered up savings of \$22 million over the biennium, that OPM has demanded that another \$1 million in personal services be cut from the Branch budget. We do not believe that the Branch can function properly without adequate staffing.

Thank you for your consideration.

