Committee on Children
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-264 / Bill Status / Public Hearing Testimony
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING.
Vote Date: 3/3/2026
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/24/2026
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to conduct a study to determine whether policy and procedural changes within DCF may improve the well-being of children in state custody. The information gathered in this study will serve to better inform both DCF policies and future action by the legislature regarding children's wellbeing when they are under the state's care.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

There is no substitute language.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Advanced-year UConn MSW candidate Shannon Coulter: Ms. Coulter supports S.B. 264. She emphasizes centering the perspectives of youth with lived experience, using evidence-informed practices, and ensuring cross-agency coordination to create meaningful, measurable improvements in child welfare outcomes.

JD/MSW Student Kate Dormont: Ms. Dormont, a former foster parent, and UConn intern, supports this bill. She promotes using evidence-based solutions, reporting findings to the legislature, and increasing transparency and accountability. Dormont recommends including

community stakeholders throughout the study and incorporating clear frameworks, timelines, and measures of success to ensure practical, meaningful improvements for children in DCF care.

CT Voices for Children, Research & Policy Director Dr. Emily Knox, Ph.D.: Dr. Knox supports S.B. 264, and she emphasizes that children in DCF custody often face trauma, instability, and unmet educational or behavioral health needs. Knox highlights that the study's success depends on DCF having adequate analytic capacity and data infrastructure to meaningfully evaluate policies and procedures. Properly resourced, the review can help align agency practices with the lived realities of children, promoting improved outcomes and accountability.

Miss Shoreline 2026 and Founder/CEO of Phoenix Rising Coaching & Consulting Kelsey Elizabeth Matthews: Ms. Matthews testifies in support of S.B. 264, drawing on her lived experience of systemic failures within DCF. She describes enduring abuse, neglect, and repeatedly unaddressed DCF reports, highlighting gaps in policy, supervision, and accountability that left her and her family in danger. Matthews stresses the need for transparency, clear goals, reporting requirements, and independent oversight in the study mandated by S.B. 264, arguing that DCF cannot objectively evaluate its own shortcomings. She strongly supports the bill, stating that these adjustments are necessary to ensure actionable findings that improve the well-being of children and families in Connecticut.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Noreen Farmer: Ms. Farmer opposes this bill by raising concerns regarding DCF's ability to conduct a study on their internal work without outside oversight. She states that this could delay urgently needed improvements.

Reported by: Mia Giglietti and Zachary Robinson Date: 3/9/2026