



***Division of Public Defender Services
State of Connecticut***

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**Testimony of
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OFFICE OF CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 5, 2015**

**Proposed Senate Bill 303
AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN EXPOSED TO FAMILY VIOLENCE.**

The Office of Chief Public Defender acknowledges that family violence is an issue that impacts many of Connecticut's children, particularly our clients in the child welfare, family and juvenile justice systems. **Proposed Senate Bill 303, An Act Concerning Children Exposed to Family Violence** would create a task force and establish a model policy for how state agencies, private providers, attorneys, guardians ad litem and the Judicial Branch address children who are exposed to family violence. If this Committee reports favorably on this proposal, the Office of Chief Public Defender respectfully requests that the Chief Public Defender, or her designee, be a statutorily mandated member of the task force.

The Office of Chief Public Defender is responsible for providing lawyers and guardians ad litem to all children in child protection matters and to indigent children in delinquency and family matters and provides ongoing training both to staff and to individuals under contract as Public Defender Assigned Counsel. Our attorneys and guardians ad litem are involved in almost every juvenile matter case and in many family matters. As a result, the Office of Chief Public Defender could provide valuable insight on how children interact with the court system and how the trauma caused by family violence could be best addressed. A representative from the Office of Chief Public Defender could also provide practical information on how task force recommendations may create a procedural or fiscal impact on the various systems being studied.