



DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES State of Connecticut

OFFICE OF CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER
30 TRINITY STREET, 4TH FLOOR
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106

ATTORNEY CHRISTINE P. RAPILLO
CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER
TEL: (860) 509-6429
FAX: (860) 509-6499

Testimony of the Office of Chief Public Defender

Susan I. Hamilton, Director of Delinquency Defense & Child Protection
Ben Daigle, Deputy Assistant Public Defender

Committee on Human Services
February 25, 2020

Raised S.B. 192 (LCO 1270):
AAC A List of the One Hundred Most Delinquent Child Support Obligor

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Raised Senate Bill 192: An Act Concerning a List of the One Hundred Most Delinquent Child Support Obligor.

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports this legislation to reflect best practices in strengthening families, collecting child support, and avoiding counterproductive shaming and stigmatization.

Attorneys within, as well as under contract with, the Division of Public Defender Services (DPDS) work in every judicial district across the state representing indigent obligors facing civil contempt charges in matters before the Family and Family Support Magistrate Divisions of the Connecticut Superior Court. Because civil contempt in such matters carries the threat of incarceration to coerce compliance with a court order, such obligors have the constitutional right to counsel.

We are grateful to Governor Lamont and Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford for proposing this legislation, and we concur with the thoughtful reasoning set forth in Commissioner Gifford's testimony.

When the House and Senate established the list/publication mandate of C.G.S. 17b-179(l) by way of House Bill 5526 (Public Act 14-177) on May 7, 2014, the votes were unanimous. Since that time, society and our state government have reached better understandings of what works in terms of strengthening family connections and collecting child support.

S.B. 192 not only acknowledges the legal and logistical concerns with the list/publication requirement, but also reflects the more modern understanding of how best to pursue the holistic mission of ensuring that children and youths have the familial and financial support they need to thrive.

We thank the committee for considering our perspective, and we encourage members to support this important legislation.