

November 10, 2005

Name

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Dear:

This year I have been given the great privilege of serving as the first Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children and Families. This Committee has received a very broad charge including consideration of all matters related to children, including child welfare and mental health. Also, this year the Children's League of Massachusetts and Representative Paul Donato took the brave step of filing legislation to repeal the general laws related to the Commonwealth's system for handling Children In Need of Services (CHINS). This matter came to the Joint Committee on Children and Families, and after hours of testimony by families, children, advocates, and providers it became very clear that now is the time for action in reforming the CHINS system.

As you may know, CHINS has been the focus of many studies and four commissions, all of which have called for reforming the system. In light of the pending legislation, and the history of research and work done to address the needs of the children and families who may encounter the CHINS system, and with the support of the Department of Social Services Commissioner Harry Spence, the Children's League of MA, and others, I have decided to bring together the key stakeholders in reforming CHINS for a meeting.

At this meeting we will discuss the work that needs to be done in order to establish a system that better serves the children and families who need the supportive services currently offered through the CHINS system. We will also learn about what other states are doing and establish working groups to accomplish this great task. **I invite you to join me for this "kick-off" meeting on November 30, 2005, 10am-12pm at the State House in room 222.**

I want to thank you for your previous work and advocacy involving CHINS and welcome you to join me as we move forward and work together to improve the lives of children and families in the Commonwealth. Please RSVP to Jill VandenBosch on my staff and feel free to call with any questions you may have. I look forward to working with you and seeing you on November 30th.

Sincerely,

Senator Karen E. Spilka
Chair, Joint Committee on Children and Families