



Truth, Trust & Transformation

Senator Panagiotakos
Chair, Senate Ways & Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

May 16, 2010

Dear Senator Panagiotakos,

I am writing to you in support of the Senate Bill 2329, *An Act Regarding Families and Children Engaged in Services* that has been put forward by Senator Spilka. As you know, she has been working tirelessly on this legislation with a number of people in the State House and across the Commonwealth for several years. The bill offers a much needed CHINS Reform that could help families tackle the challenging issues they are facing, help families stay together, avert inappropriate engagement with the court system, and ultimately save the state funds.

This legislation is particularly exciting in several ways:

- 1) It addresses a much needed and way overdue change for the Child in Needs of Services system that is ineffective at best and harmful at worst;
- 2) It proposes a system that is based on evidence based and best practices of child welfare across the country that builds on the strengths of families;
- 3) It is another critical piece to the Commonwealth's Reform efforts on child welfare, children's mental health law, and implementation of the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative; and
- 4) Although the current economic crisis continues to be very difficult for the state and most of all for the poorest and most vulnerable people in the Commonwealth, it allows for innovation and change.

The proposed legislation will be based on a community-based crisis intervention system, diversion from the juvenile justice process when possible, and a timely system for helping families and children get the assistance they need.

We have participated in the Task Force for this effort, reviewed documents throughout the past few years, and would be honored to help in any way. Given your long-standing commitment to the children and young people in the Commonwealth, it would be exciting and appropriate that this legislation is passed under your tenure. Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

Molly Baldwin, Executive Director