

**Testimony Supporting:**

**S.B. No. 1335, An Act Concerning School Readiness for Homeless Children**

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Human Services Committee Public Hearing

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Dear Senator Harris, Representative Villano and Members of the Human Services Committee:

Peg Oliveira is a Senior Policy Fellow, and Mary Glassman is Director of Legislative Affairs with Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization working statewide to promote the well being of Connecticut's children, youth and families. We are here today to testify on behalf of the sister lobbying organization – Advocates for Connecticut's Children and Youth (ACCY), a statewide, independent, citizen-based organization dedicated to speaking up for children, youth and families.

**We strongly support Raised Bill No. 1335, An Act Concerning School Readiness for Homeless Children.**

This bill would establish a pilot program that provides developmentally appropriate early care and education services, advocacy services and case management services to families with children under six years of age who reside in homeless or domestic violence shelters.

According to a 2005 report by the Office of Legislative Research, a total of 1,204 children under age six were served by DSS-funded homeless shelters between October 2003 and September 2004 (which was nearly one-half of all children served). Research continues to show that families with children are the fastest growing segment of the nation's homeless population, and half of these children are under age six.

There is also growing evidence that children who experience homelessness have more health problems, are nutritionally deprived, and have more hospitalizations and developmental problems than poor children who have never experienced homelessness. Recognizing that instability contributes to the complexity of the problem and negative outcomes, we support investment in preschool services for homeless children as well as children in low income families who are at risk of homelessness. Like the premise of the federal McKinney-Vento Act (which ensures stability in educational placement for homeless children and youth), ensuring continuity in early care is one tool in providing stability of care for children who generally experience extreme inconsistency in their lives.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill No. 1335.