

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5271 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE TO HIRE
Title: CERTAIN ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEES.

Vote Date: 3/3/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/24/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Committee on Children

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Anwar, 3rd District

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the Office of the Child Advocate to hire one or more full-time employees to assist in the oversight of children in the care of the Department of Children and Families. In light of recent findings from federal and state audits of Connecticut's child welfare system, this legislation attempts to strengthen the analytic and reporting capacity of OCA to gather the data necessary to address the concerns raised by the audits.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

LCO 2285: This authorizes OCA to hire employees to assist in the evaluation of all agencies that provide services to children. The original bill only allowed the new OCA employees to assist in evaluating DCF, and the substitute language seeks to expand OCA's oversight capabilities to allow for transparency in children's programs throughout all executive agencies.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Center for Children's Advocacy, Executive Director Sarah Eagan: Ms. Eagan and the Center for Children's Advocacy support increasing resources within the Office of the Childcare Advocate. She argues that this legislation will support sustained external and independent qualitative monitoring of safety and permanency for children in the child welfare system, thereby allowing for more transparency. Findings from recent state and federal audits reveal serious concerns regarding the state's failure to fulfill its legal obligation to protect children from abuse. She states that, "...robust oversight, continuous transparency regarding service delivery and outcomes for children and families, will help inform necessary investment and policymaking to ensure adequate support for child protection work and sustained improvement over time." Overall, this bill will allow for better oversight of child welfare policies and outcomes for children. Ms. Eagan lists other recommendations, such as a citizen review panel and funding for children's behavioral health, in future legislation.

Connecticut Voices for Children, Research and Policy Director Dr. Emily Knox, Ph.D.: Dr. Knox testifies that OCA is a vital part of child welfare oversight and transparency through its work on systemic reviews, investigations, data analysis, and publicly available reports. OCA needs sufficient staffing and capacity to accomplish this work, which makes this bill a crucial component of strengthening oversight of the child welfare system and ensuring child safety.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Mia Giglietti and Zachary Robinson Date: 3/11/2026