



March 3rd, 2010

**Testimony of Jon Clemens, Policy Specialist at CT Nonprofits,
Related to Senate Bill Number 340:
AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC SERVICE LICENSE ENDORSEMENTS, ACTIVITY
VEHICLES, AND THE DEFINITIONS OF "CARRIER" AND "STUDENT
TRANSPORTATION VEHICLE".**

Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero, distinguished members of the Committee thank you for your time and attention to the issues before you today. My name is Jon Clemens and I am a Policy Specialist at the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits, the largest trade organization in the state dedicated to nonprofits. I come representing over 500 members, including over 100 who provide services to children.

Today, I voice support for Senate Bill Number 340: AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC SERVICE LICENSE ENDORSEMENTS, ACTIVITY VEHICLES, AND THE DEFINITIONS OF "CARRIER" AND "STUDENT TRANSPORTATION VEHICLE." To be clear, this bill is not about limiting the protection afforded to Connecticut's children, as every employee hired at the DCF-related programs must undergo a thorough background check and screening before they begin working; rather, this bill is about clarifying definitions and requirements and decreasing unnecessary costs.

This bill is born from the need to streamline and make sense of the varying layers of DMV requirements. About a year and a half ago the DMV reinterpreted the existing regulations and statutes that apply to nonprofit providers. Warnings and threats of citations began. This came as a surprise to many providers who had believed that they were operating in full compliance with all laws and regulations. Following previous DMV directives, many agencies had abandoned the use of larger 16 person vans, a step they were told would allow them to continue to transport kids to off-grounds activities and services without more stringent regulations applying to them. Confusion was then compounded by the inconsistency in message and action providers were met with when seeking clarification from those at DMV; this was not necessarily the fault of the DMV workers, as it has been discovered that much of the problem is due to the fact that the existing regulations and statutes are not clear.

The providers of children's services are not professional transportation companies, and they do not seek to make a business from their driving; yet the current statutes lump them in under the definition of "carrier," along with school districts, educational institutions, and the corporations that are in the business of transporting school children for compensation. Just as in any household, workers at nonprofit programs drive children in order to maintain their links to the community: field trips, doctor's visits, outings to the movies, and, just as in any household, sometimes there is a need to drive children to school.

Nonprofit providers function with very small financial margins to begin with, the additional costs and bureaucratic burden placed upon nonprofit providers to have their employees attain public service licenses hit them hard. Additionally, due to the fact that nonprofits have not been granted adequate cost of living adjustments over the years, the nonprofit community struggles with a high turnover of direct care staff, an unfortunate reality that exacerbates the drain on program resources with each new hire.

In closing I ask that you please look upon this bill's requested changes favorably. I invite you to feel free to contact me if I can be of help in answering any questions, or in bringing together a group of providers with whom you could have a dialogue. Thank you.