

**Testimony of LaTanya Sturdivant
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**Prepared for the Human Services Committee: Tuesday, March 11th, 2008
Raised Bill No. 666: An Act Concerning the Reduction of Child Poverty**

Good Morning Senators Harris and Villano and other members of the Human Service Committee. I am LaTanya Sturdivant; a graduate student from the University Of Connecticut's School Of Social Work and I am also a single parent of a four year old male child.

Growing up in Waterbury; I've witnessed the impact of poverty on families and children and among members of minority families of color. The outcomes are often devastating. Research has shown that poverty damages brain development. According to the American Association for the Advancement of Science "many children growing up in very poor families, with low social status experience unhealthy levels of stress hormones which impair their neurodevelopment." Poverty often leads to dysfunctional beginnings, poor academic development, high drop out rates, increased involvement and exposures to violence, poor social economic outcomes, poor physical, emotional, mental health, and chronic stress that result in untimely deaths. This is one of the many reasons why I decided to pursue an educational degree in Social Work focusing on Community Organization. As a community organizer, I will work with families and communities by helping them realize their own power, assisting them with ways to address and develop strategies to utilize this power and improve situations such as this.

I support the proposed legislation Bill # 666; however I am concerned that it ignores those crucial years of child development where the child develops the skills that prepare them for learning to learn. These skills exist prior to any type of formal pre-school education and are learned through the child's interaction with his or her parent or caregiver. He or She learns to take risks, develops curiosity which leads to exploration and learning. They also learn to interact with others and most importantly, learn that failure can and does lead to success.

I urge you to expand section 6 to include strategies that address this very important stage in a child's development as an essential component in the reduction of child poverty. Children need to know how to learn before they are ready to learn, which results in greater academic success and increased chance of economic well being as adults.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this bill. I am very happy to answer any questions.

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Krugman, P. (2008, Feb. 18th) Poverty is poison. New York Times
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Parlakian, R. Before the abcs: promoting school readiness in infants and toddlers