

Connecticut Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet

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Appropriations Committee Hearing on the Human Services Budget February 18, 2009

Children's League of Connecticut

Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition

Connecticut Association for Community Action

Connecticut Association for Human Services

Connecticut Association of Area Agencies on Aging

Connecticut Association of Nonprofits

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Connecticut Community Providers Association

Connecticut Consortium of Legal Services

Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies

Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services

Connecticut Women's Consortium

Easter Seals Connecticut

End Hunger Connecticut!

Human Services Council

Oak Hill

Planned Parenthood of Connecticut

The Connection, Inc.

Wheeler Clinic

The CT Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet is a statewide coalition comprised of 20 nonprofit human service associations and organizations representing approximately 800 providers. Its mission is to advance a strong and unified nonprofit human services system to effectively meet community needs. Members play a vital role in addressing the critical health and human services needs that face so many Connecticut residents – they provide the safety net that *anyone* can find themselves in need of in the blink of an eye.

You will hear from many members of the Cabinet and those they represent throughout the Appropriations Committee process about specific budget items. The Cabinet appreciates that the Governor's budget did not include across the board cuts to human services and we sincerely hope that the Appropriations Committee will avoid any across-the-board cuts as well. Nonprofit providers went without a cost-of-living increase last year and we recognize the realities that we are faced with this year. Even if the financial crisis never occurred, nonprofits would still be underfunded and still be in need of a COLA. Given this fact, any across-the-board cuts to nonprofits would devastate our ability to provide health and human services to the state's most vulnerable residents.

We would like to commend the increased funding and eligibility for nutrition programs in the Governor's budget recommendations for the Department of Social Services (DSS) and ask that the Committee maintain these provisions. An expansion of categorical eligibility for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, coupled with an increase in the gross income test (185% of the federal poverty level up from 130%) and elimination of asset limits will help an estimated additional 19,000 families obtain the most basic human need - food. Additionally, increased funding for food pantries and food banks will help to meet the dramatically increased demands that these organizations have seen over the last several months. We encourage the Legislature to ensure that these expansions are not only carried out, but happen as soon as possible – too many Connecticut residents are struggling to put food on the table and we as a state cannot allow that to continue.

The Cabinet has concerns with some of the proposed healthcare program cuts under the DSS budget. Imposing co-pays on individuals who receive services under Medicaid or premiums for adults on HUSKY A will severely harm individuals served by nonprofits. These are the people least able to pay and we will now be asking them to come up with additional money (no easy task when you make minimum wage) for healthcare – something that should be considered a basic human right. The research shows that when such requirements are put into place thousands will choose to go without insurance, instead making trips to the emergency room for more expensive care that is ultimately funded by tax-payers.

The Cabinet firmly believes that our state's budget cannot be balanced solely on cuts - \$8 billion in cuts would be devastating to the residents of this state. And while we understand the dire financial situation and that some cuts will be necessary, we encourage the Committee to keep in mind what we want our state to look like when we come out of these difficult financial times. We must work towards a more efficient and cost-effective human services delivery system that is sustainable in the future, during both good times and bad. This will not be accomplished by eliminating essential human services to achieve short-term savings; as such cuts always result in increased costs in the long-term.

Please contact Liza Andrews, Nonprofit Cabinet Project Director with questions at landrews@ctnonprofits.org or (860) 525-5080.