February 18, 2009 Appropriations Committee

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF **THE CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND** AND **THE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN**

Good Evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Eileen McMurrer and I thank you for your support of and attention to the needs of Connecticut's youngest and most vulnerable children. As we all face critical decisions about funding priorities amidst dwindling dollars, I ask you to maintain and reinforce the valuable programs and services that the Children's Trust Fund and the Commission on Children have established. These programs have both improved lives - and in some instance *saved* lives - in private homes, neighborhoods and communities across our state. They have educated countless parents on how best to meet the needs of their own children for health, safety, and developmental gains. They have coached parents on how to speak on behalf of their children to service providers and policymakers so that their collective voices can play a leadership role in making systems of support more effective. They have provided critical data directly to administrators and legislators to inform their decisions on priorities that will fundamentally affect this youngest group of citizens as they grow and mature into the next generation of leaders. These important programs need continued funding.

But, it is important to note that the programs operated by the Children's Trust Fund and the Commission on Children – as profound as they are – would not have been fully realized without the vision, motivation and exquisite leadership skills of the current administrators and staff of these two agencies. Providing services to needy babies, children and their families is a good thing, no doubt. But the philosophies that guide the establishment and delivery of those services has a profound impact on their usefulness and results that they generate. These are *not* programs that can be lifted out of one agency and squeezed into another. The vision would become distorted, the efforts expended would be minimized, and the benefits to children would shrink dramatically. Without careful stewardship and philosophical matching of administrators and services, the programs may continue in name, but not in substance.

I urge you to please allocate sufficient funds to maintain the important programs and essential personnel at both the Children's Trust Fund and the Commission on Children so this generation and future generations will benefit.

A closing story: Louis Pasteur came from humble beginnings, his parents worked hard but were uneducated, and he was only an average student. His parents had big dreams for him. They wanted Louis to become a teacher, and steadfastly encouraged him to continue his studies. With the support of his family and others, Louis persevered and went on to establish the techniques of pasteurization, sterilization of medical instruments, and inoculation, which continue to save countless lives. Louis was also a parent, and expressed his thoughts this way, "When I approach a child, he inspires in me two sentiments: tenderness for what he is, and respect for what he may become." The Children's Trust Fund and the Commission on Children have inspired countless parents to approach their children this way. I ask you to respect children for what they may become with your fiscal support.