

Written Testimony of Candida Flores
Connecticut State Legislature
Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 16, 2009

Honorable members of Ct. Legislature's Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Candida Flores. I am the Executive Director of Family Life Education, Inc a local human service organization that has been serving families in the Greater Hartford Area for 22 years. I am here to speak with you about the **Governor's proposal to consolidate various State Departments, including the elimination of the Children's Trust Fund and its entire staff and the transfer some of CTF programs to the Department of Children and Families.**

The Children's Trust Fund has provided funding for the Nurturing Families Program at Family Life Education for the past three years. The NFN program is designed to provide a system of continuous care to promote positive parenting and reduce the incidences of child maltreatment. It is clear that both the Governor and all of you as elected officials have a very difficult task at hand in trying to balance the State budget in such difficult economic times. The state issues contracts to organizations in the community, such as FLE, to help you save families and to prevent children from potential abuse and neglect. These contracts most of the time barely provide us with the essential, basic resources to operate. In other words, these contracts cost our organizations money. I say this so that you understand that I am not here to advocate for Family Life, I am here to tell you that the NFN program, under the leadership and auspices of the

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Children's Trust Fund has proven to work and to change and improve outcomes for parents and children. The announcement that there is the potential of moving this and other CTF programs to the Department of Children and Families has created a lot of apprehension among our program participants as well as staff. The philosophy under which the Children's Trust Fund operates more than creating a funding opportunity for our organizations and an opportunity for us to reach out to many needy families, it creates partnerships with these organizations. The CTF provides to our organizations more than the typical funder would traditionally offer; it provides support, training, guidance, coaching, data that allows us to look at our performance and improve on it; a true results based accountability model. The way the program is structured under the CTF, provides the right environment to reach out to families and truly develop with them a strong bond and relationship that results in fewer families entering the child protective system and healthier and stronger children. The families we work with trust us, they open the door to our home visitors because they know that we are there to help and not to be punitive.

If the rules change, and they will change if the CTF is dismantled and the program is moved to a department with **a significantly different philosophy**, we will not see the positive outcomes we have seen for the past few years. The programs under the Children's Trust Fund **are working and are producing the right results**. We will lose many of these parents, and most likely these will be the ones that need us the most.

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It is true that you must make cuts in order to balance the budget, but look for things that do not work. The CTF has produced positive results. We want to get to these families before they become another statistic. Please do not change what has proved to be effective; there are plenty of other areas of state government where savings can be generated without negatively impacting on the lives of these families; you owe it to them.