

March 16, 2009

Dear Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Galit Sharma, I am a Clinical Supervisor of the Nurturing Families Network at the Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc. in New Haven.

My testimony is in reference to proposed Bill **No.839, an ACT CONCERNING MERGERS AND CONSOLIDATIONS OF VARIOUS STATE AGENCIES.**

I am very concerned with the proposal to eliminate the Children's Trust Fund in our state and to transfer some of its programs, including the Nurturing Families Network, to the Department of Children and Families. I would like to ask you to consider the following:

The Children's Trust Fund promotes the health, safety and welfare of children and families in Connecticut and works to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Through its programs, it reaches children and families who are most vulnerable, addresses their risk factors *early* and helps them cope and overcome their adversities *before* an incident of abuse or neglect occurs. This focus on prevention is a foundation of the Children's Trust Fund and its programs.

This is also the foundation of the Nurturing Families Network, one of the programs that under the proposed budget will become a part of the Department of Children and Families. As you may know, families are fearful of DCF becoming involved in their lives. One of our main challenges in our initial efforts to reach families in need is to convince them that we are *not* connected to DCF. If our program will, however, become a part of DCF it will lose its preventive focus and the positive outcomes for families that we have worked so hard to achieve might be compromised.

The well-documented and heavily researched success of the Nurturing Families Network is largely due to the support of the Trust Fund, the extensive training it provides to program staff and the unified structure of its multiple sites. The Trust Fund developed a system that is continuously evaluated and have shown to be effective not only in reducing incidents of child abuse and neglect but also in strengthening families, helping at-risk parents become productive and self-sufficient, and helping families break out of the cycle of poverty.

Preventive services, when effective, are in fact money savers: reduction in the rate of child abuse translates to fewer children in the care of the state that the state has to provide for; parents who work yield fewer families in need of welfare programs; and happier, confident children become happy, productive adults who don't need state assistance and don't end up in the courts and prison systems that the state has to support.

The Children's Trust Fund created a well thought-out, outcome oriented system of preventive services. A system that doesn't simply exist, but really works! Its programs make a real difference in the lives of many families in Connecticut.

Please, continue to support these families and their children as they struggle to break-out of their difficult circumstances.

Let The Children's Trust Fund continue to do its job.

I hope you will take these thoughts into consideration.

Thank you for your time.

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