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TESTIMONY FOR CONNECTICUT STATE LEGISLATURE Government Administration and Elections Committee

Regarding

The Connecticut Commission on Children

By

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Action for Bridgeport Community Development

In 1985 the Connecticut legislature established the Connecticut Commission on Children. The Commission's mandate was to "promote public policies in children's best interest."

Thirty-three years later the Governor proposes to eliminate this commission as unnecessary or redundant. Before the legislature agrees to eliminate the commission, I would ask that the legislature look at the some of the most recent accomplishments of the Commission and ask if these accomplishments are unnecessary or redundant:

- 1997 – Led on Connecticut's **School Readiness program** – a statewide infrastructure for quality early care and education
- 1998 – Created the **Early Reading Success law** – provides school options for reduced class size, full day kindergarten and school reading plans.
- 2000 – The **Lead Action for Medicaid Primary Prevention Pilot** – provides financial assistance to property owners and works with municipalities to make housing units lead safe.
- 2002 – **The Children and Homeland Security Act** – the only state law in the nation addressing the needs of children in natural and unnatural disasters.
- 2004 – Created the **Adoption reform** act that placed young children in permanent caring homes.
- 2006 – **The Prevention Initiative** -- A law that encourages state investment in proven, cost-effective **prevention** services that improve outcomes for children, youth, and families, shifting costs from the more costly crisis intervention to cost-effective prevention.
- 2008 – **The Child Poverty Reduction Law** – Connecticut became the first state in the country to enact a law setting a target for reducing child poverty.

The accomplishments of the Commission go on and on. The above only reflects a tiny sampling of the work this body produces. **I would ask the legislators, is any of the above unnecessary or redundant?**

The Commission receives \$1.0 million dollars each year to conduct research, educate the public, work with legislators and advocate for Connecticut's 800,000-plus children. This comes to an annual expenditure of \$1.30 per child in the State. Does the legislature believe that our children are not worth \$1.30 per year? Does the legislature believe that our children do not need a voice? If the Commission is eliminated, who else will speak for the children in our state? Who else will bring together the business community, law makers, and experts in the fields of health, education, child development and so on, to inform all stake holders on the needs of Connecticut's children? Who else will educate the public and the government on best practices?

While we are faced with ever increasing budget deficits, there are those that believe we cannot afford to continue to invest in our children. Frankly, that is short-sighted. The deficits in our budget speaks to the absolute necessity to continue to invest in our children. As more and more families move from near poverty into abject poverty, as more and more families face homelessness, increased despair and depression, increased hunger, as families that never experienced poverty lose their jobs, their homes – who will hear the voice of the children? Who will be their champion?

Children cannot speak for themselves. They have no lobby. All they have is the Connecticut Commission on Children. I would beg the legislators, do not take away their voice, their leadership and their advocate. Do not eliminate the Commission on Children.