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*TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 10, 2009*

I appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 816, An Act Concerning Child Support Collections.

This legislation requires the state to direct funds collected through federal income tax intercepts to a custodial parent for unpaid child support prior to the state using such funds for debts owed to the state by either parent. Until 2005, the Social Security Act required debt owed to the state to be the priority for any federal income tax intercept. Under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, the federal government granted states discretion to allow current and past due child support to the custodial parent to be the priority.

In a recent case, a custodial mother was owed \$37,000 in past due child support. As a result of financial problems, the mother also owed \$13,000 to the state for TANF benefits that she received. The state was able to recover \$7,880 from the obligor's federal income tax refund. The mother -- with \$37,000 in unpaid child support -- received not one penny. The state applied the entire amount to the \$13,000 that the mother owed the state.

In these critical economic times, the state should provide as much assistance as possible to parents raising their children alone, often without any support from the other parent. While passage of this legislation will reduce future state revenue from federal income tax intercepts, the money will go directly to families who desperately need such money to raise their children. Further, this legislation will provide the same type of priority that currently exists for funds recovered from state income tax refunds.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 816.