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# NHFA New Haven Family Alliance

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## TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

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Mr. Blannie Bostic, Project Manager  
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### SUPPORT FOR H.B. No. 6486 (Raised) AN ACT CONCERNING RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND STRONG FAMILIES

Good Afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Urban and members of the Select Committee on Children. My name is Blannie Bostic and I am the Project Manager for New Haven Family Alliance/Male Involvement Network. Also with me are Mr. Terrance McIntosh, Director of Marketing and Communication with the Community Action Agency of New Haven, Dr. Augustine Okeke, Program Coordinator, Project Brotherhood at the Hospital of St. Raphael and Mr. Rick Jennings, Director of Student Parenting and Family Services Father Care Program at Wilbur Cross High School and Tamika Bradham, Research Associate with The Consultation Center at Yale University.

The New Haven Family Alliance is the lead organization for the Male Involvement Network and has provided social services in New Haven for more than seventeen years working with New Haven's most vulnerable and fragile families. The Male Involvement Network is a collaboration of fatherhood stakeholders operating in New Haven for over ten years. We worked closely with the late Representative John Martinez in his foundational work on fatherhood in Connecticut and we helped shape the 1999 Fatherhood legislation in our state. We are here in support of House Bill No. 6486 An Act Concerning Responsible Fatherhood and Strong Families.

We support House Bill No. 6486 at this time because it helps to re-establish, as a public policy priority in Connecticut, father's role in the lives of children, and in particular poor children in our urban environments.

Connecticut was one of the first States to implement fatherhood legislation and to convene a Fatherhood Council. However, our efforts to address the issues of fatherhood, father absence and father involvement in the lives of children have fallen short and have not been a public policy priority in our State for quite some time. We have fallen behind in this arena even in light of the bodies of relevant data that demonstrate conclusively that the problems associated with father absence are monumental and that fathers are important to children: economically, socially, scholastically, morally, and spiritually. We know that the absence of fathers in families that are poor create substantial negative consequences that need to be addressed in order to engender a healthy productive society.

We in the Male Involvement Network know that supporting the healthy involvement of fathers in children's lives requires more than programmatic responses. Meaningful and effective fatherhood efforts require a collaborative working partnership of local social service agencies, interested community members, fathers, local funding sources, state entities, and academic partners aligned to address the unique needs of low-income, non-custodial fathers. This is a description of the Male Involvement Network (MIN), established in 1999 to build on the assets and services existing in our local service delivery systems. The MIN is a model that builds the capacity of a locale by creating a systematic approach to fatherhood development. Through this integrated approach, partner agencies (male involvement network members; local social service agencies, interested community members, fathers, local community foundations, state entities, and academic partners) collaboratively serve men using strategies consistent with their stated mission. The MIN systematic approach reduces interagency competition because each agency engages in practices consistent with their stated goals that also expands their clientele and requires them to examine how they uniquely serve this population of men.

The Male Involvement Network has worked in partnership with our local Magistrate and child support court since 2004 enrolling fathers with child support arrearages on-site at the court house using a state of the art database developed in partnership with New Haven Healthy Start our federally funded child infant mortality and morbidity prevention initiative. We are able to provide fathers with the range of services cited in House Bill No. 6488 that support their ability to meet the court's orders and to nurture and parent their children.

We believe that if Connecticut is to sustain our work in the area of fatherhood and regain our national leadership position in this area then the highly replicable model of the MIN can create the infrastructures needed to assist low-income, non-custodial, minority fathers.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Blannie Bostic".

Blannie Bostic, Project Manager

Male Involvement Network