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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO GOVERNOR RELL'S NOVEMBER 2009 DEFICIT MITIGATION PLAN  
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Governor Rell's November 2009 Deficit Mitigation Plan provides broad sweeping reductions in operational costs and spending in what appears to be a noble effort to balance the State budget. In doing so it slashes services to some of the most vulnerable neighbors in Connecticut's communities. These proposed funding cuts appear to be made without consideration to the benefits, both economical and social, that responsible community based organizations provide to Connecticut taxpayers.

Many of the organizations that support families through trying economic times also provide enumerable returns that strengthen the overall sustainability and health of the communities they serve. These benefits may include a reduction in the reliance on income supports, healthcare costs, and housing that are supported by the State. Diminishing savings to the State through sound social investments is detrimental to taxpayers and will only serve to extend to other budgetary crises in the future. Unfortunately, this proposed Deficit Mitigation Plan does just that.

Last year, with support from the CT Department of Labor, STRIVE was able to serve 308 low income job seekers through its employability training programs throughout the state. These are single mothers, dislocated workers, and former offenders; people who had all but given up on finding employment. These are the individuals who are relying on state assistance just to survive.

STRIVE works with the hardest to serve in our communities, and supports them in getting back to work. At STRIVE-New Haven, the current economic crisis has increased the number of people seeking the agency's services by 25 percent. Despite the downturn, however, STRIVE is still putting 77 percent of its clients to work, and more importantly, 72 percent of them remain

employed two years later. In 10 years of doing business STRIVE has served over 1,100 individuals in the New Haven area, and in the current fiscal year we will be adding another 150 to that number.

The Department of Labor funding to STRIVE, as currently budgeted, is for \$270,000. This is split equally amongst the three STRIVE sites in Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven. This is performance-based funding tied to successful outcomes in training, placing into employment, and providing supportive services to single parents, dislocated workers, and former offenders. STRIVE has a proven track record of continually exceeding its goals of helping low income workers obtain and maintain employment.

The three STRIVE sites calculate the return on investment to Connecticut taxpayers as 278 percent. This is based upon wages earned and taxes paid, as well as savings to the state in a reduction in need for income supports and re-incarceration costs. In a time when STRIVE's services are more in demand than ever, any reduction in funding would be detrimental to the solvency of these agencies. In the current mitigation plan, the three STRIVE sites in CT face a \$135,000 reduction in funding. This cut, and cuts like it that support struggling families, is an extremely short sighted decision.

I strongly urge you, our Representatives and Senators, to reject the Governor's November 2009 Deficit Mitigation Plan in support of your constituents who are working hard to prosper in these difficult times.

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