

Testimony Against Cuts to Children's Trust Fund

December 7, 2009

Dear Chairwoman Senator Toni Harp, Chairman Representative John Geragosian and Appropriations Committee Members;

I am asking for your support against the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan because I believe cuts to human service programs such as the Nurturing Families Network will not be effective in reducing the state's budget crisis. This plan will result in costly interventions for families and children, hundreds of job losses, and our abandonment of many efforts to protect the health and well-being of infants, children and families.

The Nurturing Families Network is a statewide program developed, funded and administered by the Children's Trust Fund of the Department of Social Services providing home visitation, group programming and postpartum support. Families participating in the Nurturing Families home visitation and group programs rely on these services to develop and preserve their family life goals, to access other programs, services and treatment, and to increase their parenting skills. Nurturing Families works with families to prevent child maltreatment by reducing the stresses of maternal depression, increasing parents' capacity and opportunities for attachment, linking families to community supports and services, assessing infant and child development and providing evidence-based programming to assist families in understanding and responding to their baby's/child's needs.

As a social worker I value the work of the Nurturing Families Network because by working with families early on, we can prevent harmful parenting practices, infant and child mental health problems, and families' involvement in costly and painful child protection services. I also know that NFN programs are cost-effective. Nurturing Families Networks around the state rely on volunteers, students and interns to augment their small staff; a cost-saving program model. Over the past year at our NFN site, in-kind support from volunteers, students and interns has been calculated at almost \$30,000. Since the program's inception here at UCHC, we have worked with over thirty volunteers, students, and interns. Nurturing Families Networks receive minimal yearly funding but grow strong programs with community partnerships, donations, and volunteers.

I believe the cuts proposed by the Governor's plan will have negative social and economic impacts for families as well as eliminate more jobs to human service and education workers. I am disappointed that the prevention efforts by early childhood, education, child abuse and neglect and other human service fields will be abandoned by this plan.

On December 15th, please continue to support funding for Children's Trust Fund programs and vote **NO** to the Governor's proposal.

Sincerely,

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