

December 8, 2009

Senator Toni Harp and Rep. John Geragosian
Appropriations Committee Co-Chairs



United Way
of Greater Waterbury

Dear Senator Harp and Rep. Geragosian,

Our children and youth are in jeopardy. The Governor is asking you to eliminate funding for After School programs and Community Plans for Early Childhood. It is urgent that you do not support these cuts to the budget – it would fail the community and decimate the community youth plan (Bridge to Success – a Birth to 21 initiative in Waterbury).

- The **NUMBER ONE child and youth issue Waterbury's parents plan to work on is increasing the number of safe and wholesome out of school time opportunities.** 57% of Waterbury's children said they don't feel safe. 70% of Waterbury's children resort to violence when resolving conflict which has obvious implications for juvenile justice expenses. The Bridge to Success plan will directly impact these issues.
- In Waterbury, state funds leverage local philanthropic and municipal dollars to support the work of implementing the Bridge to Success Plan – **we are likely to lose the matching philanthropic dollars if you vote to cut these funds**
- **In these difficult economic times, it is more important than ever to collaborate and coordinate resources.** Bridge to Success is strategic and focuses on achieving specific results (using results based accountability (RBA) framework)
- The development of and implementation of the Bridge to Success comprehensive youth plan has involved many parents and community members. It would be devastating to raise their expectations, and then fail community by cutting the funding as proposed.
- Loss of state capacity funds will undermine significant work already undertaken by 23 Discovery Communities (Waterbury's Bridge to Success)

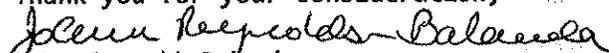
Some important statistics about Waterbury's families that should make this decision not to cut the critical funding easy for you:

- 19.6% Poverty rate (4th highest in the state)
- 34% of Waterbury's children live below the federal poverty level
- 13% Unemployment level
- 76% of the children in Waterbury's Public Schools qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 73% of the children in Waterbury's Public Schools are minorities (44% Hispanic)

Waterbury is the only city in the state that has one plan addressing the needs of children and youth, birth to age 21. The Bridge to Success is a roadmap for action for all to work together on behalf of our children and youth.

We urge you to vote to keep the \$5M funding for After School programs and the funding for the Community Plans for Early Childhood to maintain the community collaboration and leverage the matching philanthropic dollars United Way of Greater Waterbury and others have invested to Prepare Waterbury's Youth for Life.

Thank you for your consideration,


Ann Reynolds-Balanda

Vice President of Community Impact

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