

## **In Support of the Nurturing Families Network**

### **Governors Proposed Budget: To eliminate the Suspend Funding for the Nurturing Families Network – Non Hospital Sites.**

Good afternoon. My name is Julia Gonzalez Candela and I am the clinical supervisor at Family Life Education, one of the Nurturing Families sites in Hartford. In the work I do, I feel that every day and with every new family I gain new understanding about how the Nurturing Families Program helps these families and how it adapts to their unique needs. I realize that we tend to take for granted many of the things we had when we were growing up. I am not talking about material needs. I am talking about the presence of a trusted family member that we could rely on, trust, lean on, and count on. Many of the families that we work with in this program don't know that. The one thing that I don't take for granted is that the families we work with want to be better, want to be good mothers and fathers, and want the best for their children like anyone else. I don't take for granted the fact that they open their doors and their lives and trust us in their search for the answers and the path to reach their goals. I don't take for granted that we, Nurturing Families, become that someone they can count on.

I am here today because I am very concern about the integrity of the program.

Preventing child abuse and neglect is an enormous task. Nurturing Families, has shown itself to be an effective model to reduce the incidence of child abuse across Connecticut. Statewide Nurturing Families programs had a child abuse and neglect rate of 1.3 per 1000 in 2008 compared to 11.2 state rate and 19.0 in Hartford. In 2009, the child abuse and neglect rate for the Family Life Education site was 0.0.

We know that the best way to reduce cost is prevention. Preventing that a child is neglected or abused, preventing that a family disintegrates, and preventing the consequences that these brings, is the best way to reduce cost in child protective services,

foster care, child and mother health care, rehabilitation, early intervention and special education, legal services, mental health, and in many cases the continuation of the cycle of drug abuse, family violence, criminal activity, teen pregnancy, etc.

Investing in prevention is the best way to ensure cost effective services. Jeopardizing the integrity of a program that has shown its effectiveness in protecting the most vulnerable members of our society is not the answer.

Thank you for considering our concerns. Please contact me at any time with your questions or comments.

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