

Linda McDonald
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Testimony to the Appropriations Committee at the Public hearing on
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I am very concerned about the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan's proposal to dramatically cut funding to Children's Trust Funding Program including Nurturing Families Network, Parent Trust, and Family-School Connection. These programs improve the lives of children and families throughout our state; research has demonstrated that these services prevent child abuse and neglect. They are designed to build on the strengths of each family so that the families can be the best parents they can be and thrive as a family and as active members of their communities. These programs teach families that they are strong, capable and important in the lives of their children and as citizens of Connecticut.

As supervisor with the Nurturing Families Program, I can give you many reasons why this program works. The families significantly reduce their risk for abuse and neglect; parents learn about child development and ways to support healthy growth and brain development; the parents earn higher levels of education and employment rates also increase while in the program. Teen parents complete their high school degree and go on to college. Children with special needs are identified and connected with resources sooner due to the regular developmental screens administered by the home visitors. Parents of children with special needs gain a deeper understanding of their child's disability and become strong advocates for their children. Parents with depression and anxiety get connected with mental health services. With the support this program provides, Connecticut families grow strong and become invaluable assets to their children and their community.

Further, the proposed reduction in funding would result in the loss of hundreds of jobs in CT - the women and men who work for these programs and are dedicated advocates for families would become unemployed and require support from the state in the form of unemployment insurance, health insurance and possibly more. All in all, these proposed cuts would cost the state in other ways and create suffering and a great burden for many Connecticut families.