

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
On behalf of
Connecticut Youth Services Association
December 9, 2009

My name is Mary Roche-Cronin, President of the Connecticut Youth Services Association, the professional organization representing 94 Youth Service Bureaus serving over 100 communities statewide. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns regarding the Governor's proposed budget deficit mitigation plan.

Governor Rell has recommended a 25% cut in Youth Service Bureau (YSB) funding and I am here to tell you what the impact of that cut will mean to YSBs.

YSBs are legislatively mandated to provide services that make critical interventions in the lives of young people. Many of these interventions are designed to divert young people from the Juvenile Justice system as well as keep young people from costly "out of district" placements. These interventions save both municipalities and the state of Connecticut millions of dollars each year by keeping youth in their own communities. If Governor Rell's YSB cuts occur, the state will actually pay more in Juvenile Justice services and treatment costs for youth. Based on the actual numbers of youth referred to YSBs statewide, the cost to the state for YSB services is a miniscule \$88 per youth. Yet, the cost for just one youth in Juvenile Justice services or residential placement is between \$40,000 and \$150,000. Let me repeat, the cost for just one youth in Juvenile Justice services is between \$40,000 and \$150,000.

Because YSBs are both state and municipally funded, Governor Rell's proposal will impact YSBs by both the \$25% reduction in funding as well as by her proposed cuts to aid to municipalities. Many YSBs will not be able to recover from these reductions and it will likely end in their demise, thereby increasing the cost of state and local dollars spent on Juvenile Justice and out of district or residential placements.

Last October, the State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and Department of Children and Families (DCF) awarded the Local Implementation Services Team (LIST) role to YSBs in 11 out of 13 court districts statewide. LISTs will coordinate services for dually involved children and youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System. The LIST project came without any funding whatsoever but because the responsibilities of the LIST are so closely aligned with the legislative mandates of the YSBs, it was a responsibility that YSBs felt compelled to assume in partnership with CSSD and DCF. With a \$25% reduction in state funding and additional municipal cuts, however, YSBs may not be able to fulfill their responsibility to coordinate the LISTs. If this were to occur, it would lead to additional gaps in services for CSSD/DCF involved youth, additional costs for the State of Connecticut for services that will not be provided by YSBs and in some cases an ultimate collapse of many of the YSB services that these children and youth utilize.

Additionally, YSBs are currently involved in two Results Based Accountability (RBA) projects with State Department of Education and with the Office For Workforce Competitiveness. These projects will establish a statewide RBA framework for YSB work with children, youth and their families. These projects would also be in jeopardy should the 25% cut in state funding for YSBs occur.

We ask that you reconsider the 25% reduction in YSB funding and that you continue to invest in the work of Youth Service Bureaus.

Thank you for your continued support of Youth Service Bureaus.