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Testimony Response to the Governor’s November 24th Deficit Mitigation Plan
Presented to the Appropriations Committee
Submitted by Sherry Linton
Early Care & Education Policy Analyst

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and Committee Members. The Connecticut Association for Human Services would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to respond to the Governor’s Deficit Mitigation Plan. The Governor describes her plan as, “Cuts Deeply Painful—Yet Unquestionably Necessary,” in her press release on November 24th. I would like to give some perspective to the effects of some of the cuts being suggested and ask that you reject these cuts as “necessary” and take steps to identify bolder and more creative solutions to this economic challenge.

Of grave concern are the suggested cuts that will directly affect Connecticut’s children and most disenfranchised families. During these times when it is imperative for parents to be working in order to provide basic needs of food and shelter to their children, the Governor puts forth cuts that will further jeopardize the options of working families.

Just this past Saturday morning, the Speaker’s Task Force on Children in the Recession heard testimonies from families who have lost their jobs, cannot find new jobs, are unable to make ends meet, do not have enough money to put food in the refrigerator, and are living without electricity. Teens told heart-wrenching stories about what they are doing to financially support their parents and siblings and are experiencing stress so great that they avoid going home for as long as possible. It is apparent that the Governor is so far removed from these realities that she does not fully grasp the negative impact that her recommendations would have on children and families.

First and foremost, in order for families to work they need to be able to access affordable child care.

- *The Governor’s Plan calls for a nearly 30 percent funding reduction, pending legislative approval, to State-funded Child Development Centers that could result in 670 children losing access to child care. This devastating cut not only hurts children, but parents who will need to leave their jobs to take care of their children, and the child care employees who will join the ranks of the unemployed. It’s a lose-lose proposition for children, parents, employees, and the economy.*
- *The Governor’s Plan also calls for what can be construed as a forced lapse of \$10.7 million dollars in child care assistance funding. The legislature budgeted \$103.87 million in FY10 for the child care assistance program, Care 4 Kids, yet the Department of Social Services is taking steps to ensure that no more than \$93million is spent by limiting the enrollment of families. On November 18, 2009 DSS testified before this Committee of anticipating a surplus of \$10.7 million in the child care assistance budget. That “surplus” will result from intentionally limiting the access of families to child care assistance. The Department’s & Governor’s sole focus is the maintenance of effort necessary to retain the \$13.7 million in federal Child Care*

and Development Block stimulus funds, and fall short of spending the full \$103.87 million obligated in the budget passed by the legislature..

- *The Governor's Plan also recommends eliminating funding for the Commission on Children. This Commission acts as a bridge for advocates, families and children connecting all to legislative processes and being a conduit that allows all to have a voice in policy and planning.*

Additional concerns with the Governor's Mitigation Plan include the elimination of funding for Community Plans for Early Childhood Education and elimination of funding for Improving Early Literacy. In both these cases, philanthropic entities had committed to matching the state funds, which would double the state investment in early childhood education. We are also deeply concerned about the deep cut to the Children's Trust Fund and Nurturing Families program.

While, we all recognize that some cuts are in fact necessary, it is imperative that those cuts are made strategically and will not result in short-term gains and excessive long-term losses. The recommended cuts outlined gamble with the lives and future success of children and the basic needs of families.

The time is well overdue to expand the thinking of balancing the budget beyond cuts to include the options for revenues. As Connecticut remains the richest state in the nation, the state's budget should not be balanced by cutting services to our children and families who are struggling to survive this economic recession.

Thank you again the opportunity to offer public comment. For more information, I can be reached at, *Sherry Linton, Early Care and Education Policy Analyst, 110 Bartholomew Ave Hartford, CT 06106, (860) 951-2212 x233, slinton@cahs.org.*

An analysis by Connecticut Voices for Children reveals that early childhood programs face significant cuts.

\$530,870 immediate rescission to State-funded Centers plus a \$3,970,275 reduction pending legislative approval. (\$4,501,145 cut = 28.3% reduction of state funding, and 14.3% reduction of total funding). The pending \$3,970,275 reduction is found within the proposed line item cut entitled "Reduce Non-Entitlement Grant Accounts by 25%." The Connecticut Office of Fiscal Analysis was contacted to determine the specific amount of the cut proposed for State-funded Centers under this heading.

Elimination of funding for Community Plans for Early Childhood pending legislative approval. (\$450,000 cut = 100% reduction). Additional loss of private matching funds.

Elimination of funding for Improving Early Literacy pending legislative approval. (\$150,000 cut = 100% reduction). Additional loss of private matching funds.

Elimination of funding for the Office of Early Childhood Planning, Outreach, and Coordination pending legislative approval. (\$400,000 cut = 100% reduction)

Forced lapse of \$10.7 million from Care4Kids. (\$10.7 million unused = 10.3% reduction). The Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) is terming this money a "surplus" and this amount is not listed as an official forced lapse. However, DSS testimony on November 18, 2009, clearly indicates that DSS is planning to spend only \$93 million (out of \$103.87 million budgeted) on Care4Kids, which has the same effect as an official forced lapse.

\$571,173 immediate rescission to the Children's Trust Fund plus a \$4,023,144 reduction pending legislative approval. (\$4,594,317 cut = 33.8% reduction). Note that the proposed cut includes elimination of the Parent Trust Fund (\$500,000) and the suspension of funding for Nurturing Families Network Non-Hospital Sites (\$1,759,560).