

CONNECTICUT YOUTH SERVICES ASSOCIATION



February 11, 2009

Chairman Harp, Chairman Geragosian and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Mary Roche Cronin and I am the President of the Connecticut Youth Services Association. I am here this evening to testify on behalf of the Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) in Connecticut.

We would like to bring your attention to the line items regarding Governor Rell's recommendation to eliminate and/or reduce funding to the YSBs by nearly \$1.3 million dollars.

Two years ago, CYSA worked with Senators Handley and Harp and Representatives Fleischmann and Merrill to establish the YSB Enhancement Grant, which was \$1.25 million dollars for two years. That grant allowed YSBs to provide a variety of additional programs and services to children and youth. Outcomes from these programs and services were impressive and we would be happy to forward that information to you. Governor Rell is recommending the elimination of that funding.

Furthermore, the Governor is also recommending the reduction of the YSB Entitlement grant by \$41,000. While this amount seems comparatively small for YSBs already working on a shoestring budget, it is potentially harmful. This Grant provides the basic funding to YSBs across the state. Because the majority of YSBs are municipally based, a reduction of the grant, together with other state reductions, would further impact a city or town's ability to provide needed services to children and youth.

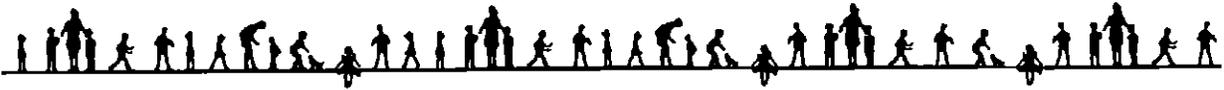
Additionally, because of the formula that is currently used to distribute the Entitlement Grant, there are approximately thirty (30) YSBs that are funded at the base level of \$14,000. No matter what changes are made to the Entitlement Grant, these YSBs will only receive \$14,000. This is the reason that the Enhancement Grant was established in the first place. That grant allows these YSBs to receive enhanced funding by a population ratio instead of by the original funding formula. While all YSBs benefited from the Enhancement Grant, it was a particular benefit to the YSBs receiving the minimum Entitlement grant of \$14,000 because they had the ability to provide additional programs and services.

It is also important to note that the current YSB Entitlement Grant funding of \$2,944,000 is actually \$284,825 LESS than our highest grant award of \$3,228,825 in 1995.

CYSA, the professional organization that serves as the collective voice of the Connecticut Youth Service Bureau system, is dedicated to promoting quality services for Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

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We know that everyone is going to have to share the burden that these economic times are forcing upon us however, we respectfully request that the amount of the burden be determined proportionally and on a case-by-case basis. In our case, we believe that this nearly \$1.3 million dollar reduction in funding is an unfair burden for YSBs and we ask that instead of the complete elimination of the Enhancement Grant, you consider cutting it by half and preserve the entire Entitlement Grant.

Thank you for your consideration and I welcome any questions.

Mary Roche Cronin, M.A., J.D.
President

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