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Good afternoon. My name is Laura Amenta. I am the Chair of the Children's Trust Fund Council and appreciate this opportunity to address the impact of the Governor's fiscal and statutory changes regarding Connecticut's Children's Trust Fund.

The Council understands that the state is facing a serious financial crisis and that the Governor and now the legislature face a difficult task of finding ways to balance the budget.

However, the Governor's proposal to eliminate The Children's Trust Fund and its staff will undoubtedly end up costing the state much more than it will save.

Every five minutes, a child in Connecticut is a victim of child abuse or neglect. Though over 10,000 cases are substantiated yearly, many more are not. Child abuse and neglect cuts across all socio-economic, geographic, ethnic and gender lines. There is a direct correlation between the abuse and neglect perpetrated on our youngest citizens and crime and violence in later years. It is also well documented that children who are abused are more likely to experience adverse outcomes including: poor physical health, poor emotional and mental health, social difficulties, cognitive dysfunction, high risk health behaviors, and behavioral problems.

But the good news is child abuse and neglect can be prevented, and for every \$1 spent on prevention, over \$6 can be saved on the consequences of abuse. By investing in the Children's Trust Fund, we save the state on costly services for abused children through agencies such as DCF, DSS, or the Department of Corrections.

The Connecticut Children's Trust Fund is committed to primary prevention of child abuse as opposed to intervention. The Trust Fund serves two basic purposes. -1 We administer grass roots programs dedicated to prevention. -2 We engage in research towards determining the effectiveness of prevention programs.

The proposed elimination of staff would save just over \$1.5 Million. What do the taxpayers get for \$1.5 Million? They get a well functioning organization with a highly trained and multi-disciplined staff that we should take advantage of - not eliminate. This staff has successfully created programs for our state that are now recognized nationally. Our Nurturing Family Network program has been recognized by the Office of Juvenile Justice and our Help Me Grow Program is now being replicated nation-wide.

Evidence-based research has shown that the Trust Fund 's programs not only successfully prevent abuse and neglect, but they also help thousands of Connecticut parents make certain that their children will be healthy, developmentally on track, and able to meet their full potential.

It is not realistic to think that successful and valuable prevention programs for families can be transferred and run by The Department of Children and Families. DCF is already overburdened and struggling with its multiple missions. Over the course of last fall, public hearings held jointly by the Human Services Committee and the Select Committee on Children made it clear that there is a disconnect between the statutory mission of DCF and its operations. The public has lost confidence in DCF. Successful prevention programs require a level of trust between families and program workers that is currently lacking with DCF.

Additionally, prevention programs are even more important during periods of economic downturns when families are much more vulnerable and the incidence of abuse increases.

Conservative estimates of the monetary cost of child abuse and neglect, both direct and indirect, cost our nation's taxpayers more than \$258 Million dollars per day with annual amounts of over \$1400 per American family for the consequences of abuse versus only \$1.06 spent on prevention.

Child abuse prevention is an acknowledged responsibility of the state of Connecticut. Rather than cutting a core prevention agency, there are alternative ways to balance the budget and preserve important prevention programs. One alternative strategy is to look at the number of

prevention programs scattered across a number of state agencies to see if there is a way to bring these together in a more logical, cost effective way.

By bringing like prevention programs together, we can cost effectively strengthen, rather than limit, the state's commitment to helping families stay out of the child welfare and other state systems while ensuring the positive growth and development of their children.

Laura Amenta
Chair, The Children's Trust Council
The Children's Trust Fund of Connecticut

Endnotes:

Annual official figures for children maltreated and confirmed deaths

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. Children's Bureau (2009). *Child maltreatment 2006*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/index.htm>

The total number of children maltreated may be even higher

Sedlak, A. J. & Broadhurst, D. D. (1996) *Executive summary of the third national incidence study of child abuse and neglect*. Retrieved from The US Department of Health and Human services web site: <http://www.calib.com/nccanch/pubs/statinfo/nis3.cfm#national>

Over 6 dollars saved on every dollar spent by taxpayers

Aos., S. Miller, M., & Drake, E. (2006) *Evidenced-based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates*. Retrieved from <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov>

Monetary cost of Child Abuse and Neglect to taxpayers

Fromm, S. (2001), *Total Estimated Costs of Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States: Statistical Evidence*. Retrieved from Prevent Child Abuse America web site http://www.preventchildabuse.org/publications/cap/cap_2002/cost_of_child_abuse_and_neglect.pdf