

Testimony Prepared for Presentation to the Appropriations Committee Public Hearing 2/18/09

Good Afternoon, my name is Noraleen Dunphy and I am the Director of the Nurturing Families Network Program at The Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport. I am also a voter, a taxpayer, a parent and a Registered Nurse. Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee today in support of the Ct Children's Trust Fund.

As you know, The Nurturing Families Network is funded by the Children's Trust Fund, a state agency created by the legislature in 1997 for the sole purpose of *preventing* child abuse and neglect. The mission of the Trust Fund is unique in that it is designed to engage families before a crisis occurs and to actually prevent abuse and neglect from happening. We know that prevention works; research on Home Visiting by HFA (Healthy Families America) clearly demonstrates that the risk of child maltreatment is 2-3x higher among children living in families not receiving home visiting services compared with those enrolled in a program.

At first glance it is understandable why the Governor would look to collapse the Trust Fund as a cost saving measure. But, as is often the case, what looks good on paper, can actually turn out very differently; and that is what I want to address today.

Prevention and intervention are two very different services and belong in two very distinct agencies. The families the Nurturing Programs are engaged with are either pregnant with or have just given birth to their first child....the are *brand new parents!* Many of these parents have grown up with the specter of child protective services hanging over there heads.

To be able to offer them a program, *completely voluntary* and unlike any other program they may be familiar with, is very often necessary to obtain their "buy in".

There is no doubt that the consequences of child maltreatment are costly. According to PCAA, (Prevent Child Abuse America) the direct costs of intervening and treating the medical and emotional injuries of abuse and neglect as well as the indirect costs associated with the long term effects of abuse and neglect cost our society over \$9.4 billion annually. However, preventing the abuse and neglect from happening in the first place, will not only keep children safe and avert the consequences, but will actually save money.

A study by the Colorado Children's Trust Fund estimated that funding home visiting services to first time families would cost \$32 million annually... compare that figure to their annual budget of \$402 million for child protective services and the savings are staggering.

In other words, for every \$1.00 spent, \$12.00 is saved!!!!!!

Our Nurturing Program here in Bridgeport, has the distinction of being one of the first in Connecticut. We have worked with almost 500 families since we began, thirteen years ago, in January 1996. We know our community needs and we sincerely believe that the Nurturing Programs belongs with the Children's Trust Fund, the agency that has successfully developed and grown prevention programs.

Eliminating the Children's Trust Fund would truly be "*Penny Wise, Pound Foolish*"!!!!

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