

In Support of the Children's Trust Fund

Governors Proposed Budget: To eliminate the Children's Trust Fund and its entire staff and to transfer some of its programs to the Department of Children and Families.

Good afternoon. My name is Julia Gonzalez Candela and I am the clinical supervisor at Family Life Education, one of the Nurturing Families sites in Hartford. In the work I do, I feel that every day and with every new family I gain new understanding about how the Nurturing Families Program helps these families and how it adapts to their unique needs. I realize that we tend to take for granted many of the things we had when we were growing up. I am not talking about material needs. I am talking about the presence of a trusted family member that we could rely on, trust, lean on, and count on. Many of the families that we work with in this program don't know that. The one thing that I don't take for granted is that the families we work with want to be better, want to be good mothers and fathers, and want the best for their children like anyone else. I don't take for granted the fact that they open their doors and their lives and trust us in their search for the answers and the path to reach their goals. I don't take for granted that we, Nurturing Families, become that someone they can count on.

I am here today because I am concerned about the integrity of the program and how the perceptions of the program held by the families that need us would change should our program be made part of the Department of Children and Families.

The Children Trust Fund plays a critical role in the work that we are doing with these families. It is not only that it effectively administers, coordinates and creates cohesion between the 42 sites across the state. The Children Trust Fund staff continuously work to understand, improve, and adapt to the needs of the families. This means to mindfully work with the staff involved at all levels to discuss and find the best practices to serve our communities in their changing circumstances. They provide an incredibly complete series

of training for all the staff directly working with families. Nurturing Families is a paraprofessional model, therefore, the training provided by CTF generates a pool of home visitors that have the skills to better understand and serve their communities. These trainings are the specific tools these home visitors need to help families understand the challenges of parenthood and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Preventing child abuse and neglect is an enormous task. Nurturing Families, with the support of the Children's Trust Fund, has shown to be an effective model to reduce the incidence of child abuse across Connecticut.

We know that the best way to reduce cost is prevention. Preventing that a child is neglected or abused, preventing that a family disintegrates, and preventing the consequences that this brings, is the best way to reduce cost in child protective services, foster care, child and mother health care, rehabilitation, legal services, mental health, and in many cases the continuation of the cycle of drug abuse, criminal activity, teen pregnancy, etc.

Investing in prevention is the best way to ensure cost effective services. Jeopardizing the integrity of a program that has shown its effectiveness in protecting the most vulnerable members of our society is not the answer.

Thank you for considering our concerns. Please contact me at any time with your questions or comments.

Julia Gonzalez Candela, MS, CRC
Clinical Supervisor, Nurturing Families
Family Life Education
39 Grace Street
Hartford CT 06106
(860) 233-9700
jgcandela@familylifeedu.org