

FROM THE DESK OF HEATHER KOSMULSKI

February 17, 2009

Dear Governor Rell and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

As you may know, February has been designated as Parent Leadership month, and yet simultaneously the governors proposed budget cuts, which are the very programs designed to promote Parent Leadership are being threatened. Such impacted programs that promote Parent Leadership would be the People Empowering People (PEP) program, the Parent Leadership Training Program (PLTI) and the Parent SEE program all of which give tools to parents in the advocating for their families as well as teaching much needed civics. As many of you are aware, the Governor's budget proposal does not include funding for the Parent Trust Fund, the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) and the Commission on Children (COC); which is vital to the maintaining of numerous educational opportunities available to parents in the hopes of promoting Parent Leadership. In addition, Governor Rell has recommended the consolidation and elimination of some Agencies and Commissions that would eventually hinder the progress of Parent Leadership in our State as well as minimalizing the successes of these independent Agencies and Parent Leaders.

Obviously the loss of funding and consolidation to the Children's Trust Fund, the Commission on Children and the Parents Trust Fund would be detrimental because these funds/grants have been allocated to programs designed to educate parents on community organizing, advocacy, peer support and ways to strengthen our communities. These programs are sometimes the only resource a parent may have to gain ideas and skills, while safe, on-site childcare is provided. In a recent PEP program held at the Torrington Child Care Center participants met with key civic leaders, including Mayor Ryan Bingham. We learned to navigate community resources and we were required to complete a community project. One such project involved fundraising for a local family who had lost their 16 month old daughter to a prolonged terminal illness the funds raised provided the family with desperately needed funds.

These programs, that will be affected, are vital to a strong healthy community. Most of the participants in the PEP program stated that they would not have had the opportunity to participate in this program without having quality childcare provided; of note 100% of those who took part in the 10 week program completed it. Graduates from these programs have gone on to do wonderful things for their communities and the economy of the state. One local group worked with the Park and Recreation Department to put up new safer playscapes for our children, others have gone on to become facilitators and are leading new groups of parents, and finally there have been those parents who have become Board of Education members, Senators, City Council members, and Representatives.

Please do not cut the funding that provides a way for all of these parents to better educate themselves, strengthen their families and unite their communities.

Respectfully,

Heather Kosmulski, Parent Leader
Co-Chair Parent's Committee
Co-Chair Executive Board Torrington Early Childhood
Collaborative