

Dear Appropriations Committee,

I unfortunately am unable to communicate to you in person how strongly I feel about preserving the funding for the Children's Trust and the Commission on Children. I am a member of the current Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) in Waterbury. Not even half-way into the course, I already know how incredibly fortunate I am to have the opportunity to network with like-minded parents, and to learn how to be an effective leader in my community. These are some of the reasons I believe that when I look back on the monumental events of my life, undergoing this training will be on the list:

- I have been made conscious that as a parent, I am a child's strongest advocate
- Every vote, and voice, can have far-ranging impact
- Regardless of our color, religion, cultural background or socioeconomic status, as parents we all share a common goal (making the world a better place for our children), and we can be extremely effective when we work together
- Communication skills, written and verbal, are paramount when seeking change - and PLTI places great emphasis on honing these
- The group's diversity opens up its trainees' minds to the plights faced by others - and creates greater unity
- Several of my classmates are newly naturalized citizens and undoubtedly appreciate their US citizenship all the more, as they are being trained to exercise their democratic vote, which was impossible in their countries of origin

Most of the members of my class are from Waterbury, which with its 60% (at least) poverty rate, highest rate of teen pregnancy, and lackluster to say the least, education and unemployment records, faces an overwhelming number of problems. More problems than any legislator could possibly tackle alone - but can be greatly mitigated by engaging concerned citizens, such as PLTI graduates. Unless you wish to funnel the majority of your budget into the judicial system (which will be the short-term and long-term effect of your proposed cuts), I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of maintaining programs such as those that fall under the umbrella of the Children's Trust and the Commission on Children. Unfortunately, many of today's societal problems are a result of short-term thinking and cuts masqueraded as reform. It would take great courage for legislators who are limited by relatively short terms, to actually legislate with the longer term in mind. Studies have repeatedly shown that funding programs that promote better parenting, citizenship, and basically give children a better chance at succeeding, end up costing society much less in the long run, both financially and in other less quantifiable but no less valuable ways.

I implore you to reconsider these budget cuts. By maintaining the programs in place, you will be communicating that 1) you care about Connecticut's children and families and 2) you are committed to empowering citizens. I am confident that you will be able to find other creative ways to reduce state spending, in ways that are less destructive.

Sincerely,  
Susanne H. Navas  
Southbury, CT