Testimony: February 19, 2009

Good Afternoon,
My name is Flo Woodiel from West Hartford.

I am pleased to be here to day to talk a bit about one of my favorite subjects, the Children's Trust Fund. Thank you for allowing me to testify on its behalf.

I was appointed to the Trust Fund Council 12 years ago by then Senate Pro Tem, Kevin Sullivan, serving right at the time that Governor John Rowland and the Connecticut General Assembly designated the Trust Fund an independent agency to look at the prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. I served those twelve years, first as a member of the Council and then as its chair for the last five. I only just "retired" last year, but the work of the Trust Fund continues to occupy my thoughts and gladden my heart.

To hear that there is even a possibility to shut down the agency, one that I have had the privilege of seeing grow from a small dream of prevention to a 17 million dollar vibrant entity that has taken the lead in the prevention field and looked upon by other states as a model of success, is troubling indeed. When I heard this news, I knew I had to come and speak on behalf of the good work and successes piled up over the life of this vital and important agency.

When the Trust Fund was launched we identified a major priority: we wanted to make sure that there were clear, measurable signs of progress (or failure). If we had to come to the legislature or to a private funding source we wanted to have solid research on which to base our request for funding.

We therefore entered into a partnership with Professor Tim Black of University of Hartford to provide that research as an on-going, regular evaluation when there were signs that the program needed a shift, we were able to do it efficiently and quickly. As a result of this fruitful collaboration, we have been able to show proven measures of positive results over the years with our home visitation program, Nurturing Families Network while showing a positive 1:6 dollar-savings over the long term. For a comparatively small amount of money we have consistently had really good outcome measurements AND cost savings as well, How many other agencies can say that with impunity?!

The CTF is a small agency as state agencies go. I believe the Children's Trust Fund success is largely due to its highly focused approach to children's issues.

It has a unique mindset. Its efforts go only in one direction -- the direction of prevention of child abuse. It seeks to stop that which is a tragedy in the making, costing millions in dollars, untold trauma in families' lives, and most of all the inability of Connecticut's

youngest citizens to reach their highest potential. **This is the single, laser beam focus of the Children's Trust Fund**

My state senator, Jonathan Harris, has said to me that the criteria for measuring which state programs the Legislature chooses to include or discard are the following:

- Do no harm to the economy
- Show measurable cost benefit
- Avoid cuts to the most vulnerable

Let me repeat:

- Do no harm to the economy
- Show measurable cost benefit
- Avoid cuts to the most vulnerable

By these criteria, I believe the Trust Fund fully passes muster. I hope you will seriously examine the wisdom of removing the Trust Fund from the list of closures being considered.

In closing I will remind you:
**As the old adage so rightly observes: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!**

Thank you for your time