Written Testimony

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Regarding: *The Governor's proposed budget to eliminate The Children's Trust Fund, The Commission on Children and the Parent Trust*

Honorable elected officials, thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my deep concern about the possible elimination of the Children's Trust Fund and The Commission on Children.

My name is Ava Hart, I am a parent of three school-aged children, a PLTI graduate, and a Parent SEE graduate which are programs founded by The Commission on Children. I am also a Nurturing Parenting Group Coordinator, one of the many programs supported by the Children's Trust Fund. I will offer you a unique perspective on the magnitude of the importance of the continued funding of The Children's Trust Fund and the Commission on Children.

I have had the opportunity to feel the positive impacts of both entities in a professional and personal manner. As a young parent, I was empowered and educated by the trained professionals that facilitate the PLTI classes at a time in my life when I was unsure about the educational community as it pertained to me and my children. Since graduating from PLTI I have advocated for children in many areas of life and I have been extremely effective in communicating the needs of children in my community. Since being exposed to PLTI I've received an undergraduate degree in human services and am currently in the second year of an MSW Graduate program. As a MSW Intern, I often encounter parents that remind me of myself; caring, generous individuals that have a lot to offer but have not yet found their voice. I see PLTI as a catalyst for parents searching for their voice to better the lives of children in their community. I am advocating that the State of CT continues to be proactive in its support of the commission on children.

In regards to The Children's Trust Fund they have supported various programs by offering funding, creating policies and procedures, offering technical assistance, providing educational trainings and validating individual and family achievements through research and evaluation. Particularly, I am a facilitator for the Nurturing Parenting Program which is funded by The Children's Trust Fund. I have witnessed first hand the positive impact the program has had on parents and children throughout the Middlesex County communities. Statistical data shows that Nurturing Parenting groups have been effective in helping families develop better communication skills, positive parental attitudes, and enhanced familial cohesiveness. The information, support, and interaction provided by these psycho-educational groups also reduce the risk of abuse and neglect.

In closing I would like to reiterate that both of these state funded organizations have played a vital role in providing guidance, educational programs, leadership opportunities and reduced isolation for the caregivers of our most vulnerable population.... our children...our future.

Regards,

Ava M. Hart