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Testimony of Sarah Chasse on behalf of Marcia Bok  
Human Services Committee, Budget Hearing  
Tuesday February 18, 2009

Good afternoon. My name is Sarah Chasse and I am delivering the testimony of Marcia Bok on behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, in regards to portions of the Governor's budget. The massive jobs and service cuts that the Governor is proposing are in total opposition to what economists and the Obama administration are passionately advocating. At a time when we need to stimulate the economy in order to help the economy grow, cuts in jobs, housing, education, health care, youth employment, and juvenile justice – to name only a few of many more cuts – is in direct opposition to what we are trying to accomplish on the federal level. Doesn't it make sense for the state and federal government to be working hand in hand and not in opposition to each other? And we can do this through revenue enhancement. This revenue enhancement, proposed by a new coalition of organizations called Better Choices for Connecticut, has outlined strategies for increasing revenue that would not be painful to Connecticut residents and industries and would, on the contrary, benefit residents and industries by creating jobs, housing, and other desperately needed services. Cutting jobs and services can only further depress an already very depressed economy. Adding economic stimuli would help the economy and help the people who need it the most – low-income and middle class individuals and families.

I want to briefly mention just a few of the many egregious proposals in the Governor's budget, specifically focusing on DCF. I think DCF has an enormously difficult job and that is why practically eliminating the Office of the Child Advocate is not in the interest of children, families or DCF. Eliminating funding for safe harbor respite, juvenile justice group homes, and wraparound funding for community services sets back some of the most important progress that DCF has made. This is also especially true in relation to postponing funding for Raise the Age which was fought for so hard and successfully in the last legislative session. Other transition services for youth aging out of the DCF system are vitally needed to avoid homelessness and further mental health and substance abuse problems. We already don't provide enough funds for prevention and early intervention to avoid later problems, and the differential response system needs to be implemented to remedy some of these concerns.

As legislators I know you are very concerned about the problems the state is facing. But we cannot go along with the Governor's declaration of "no new taxes". These are urgent times and we cannot be satisfied with only cutting jobs and services to the people of the state who are the most in need. This is not only bad for the people, but also very bad for the state. We need to think and act boldly. Thank you for your attention.