



**Hospital of
Saint Raphael**

A member of the Saint Raphael Healthcare System

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**TESTIMONY BY
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HOSPITAL OF SAINT RAPHAEL**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC BUDGET HEARINGS
February 18, 2009**

**RE: H.B. No. 6365, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE 30, 2011, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

The Hospital of Saint Raphael opposes House Bill 6365, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2011, and Making Appropriations Therefor which would eliminate the Children's Trust Fund Council and its entire staff, and transfer some of its programs – including the Nurturing Families Network Program – under the auspices of the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

As many of you are aware, many of the families that the Hospital of Saint Raphael works with are socio-economically vulnerable, are marginalized from the community, and have a history of child abuse and neglect. When families are approached with information and the offer to participate in the Nurturing Families Network Program, many families – particularly those most in need of services – have questions about why they have been “identified” as needing parenting support. We have been able to reassure these families that the Nurturing Families Network Program is universally offered to all Connecticut State residents. This point is especially important to mothers and fathers that had DCF involvement as children, for the families that are undocumented, and for the families that have little social support. Without their participation in this program, instead of reaching out to all the services available to them and their children, they risk withdrawing further from the community.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of its mission and work – and perceptions that have been formed, many families will not voluntarily participate in programs under DDF. The Nurturing Families Network Program is the only program in the State that can reach every new parent and offer support with ‘no strings attached’.

We also have concerns that the Nurturing Families Network Program – an initiative that has been shown to reduce risks for child abuse and neglect – will become lost within the DCF system. Under the Children's Trust Fund, the program has flourished and our staff are well trained and well supported. DCF is currently working hard to meet the current responsibilities of their existing array of services and programs. Adding even more programming and services, may lead to fragmentation and a lack of training and support that would reduce the effectiveness of the Nurturing Families Network Program.