



**NARAL  
Pro-Choice Connecticut**

**Appropriations Committee  
Department of Social Services Budget  
Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Executive Director  
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut  
February 18, 2009**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jillian Gilchrest and I am the executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut and Vice Chair to the Connecticut Coalition for Choice. NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut is a statewide political advocacy non-profit that works to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices and the Connecticut Coalition for Choice is comprised of 15 organizations that collectively represent over 130,000 individuals statewide.

I am here tonight to express two concerns with the Governor's proposed cuts to the Department of Social Services budget—the elimination of prenatal services for women who don't qualify for Medicaid and the elimination of Teen Pregnancy Prevention Block Grants. Understanding full well that our state is in the midst of extremely difficult economic times, I am merely cautioning you on the future financial impacts of the Governor's proposed budget on our state and its citizens.

The Governor has proposed to eliminate funding for prenatal services for women who don't qualify for Medicaid-- undocumented women. There is certainly disagreement over whether public dollars should be used to provide medical services to undocumented immigrants, but the bottom line is that undocumented immigrants seek medical care, and it is a lot more cost effective to provide prenatal services than it is to provide neonatal services and long term care.

When women don't receive prenatal care they are at greater risk for low birth weight and pre-term births. They also face longer hospital stays, increased costs of neonatal care, and increased costs for long term care. According to a study published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, for every dollar cut from public funding of prenatal care for undocumented women, there is an increase of \$4.63 in long term care<sup>1</sup>. So if the state of Connecticut agrees to

the Governor's proposed elimination of prenatal services, we are looking at a short term gain of \$2 million with a long term cost of over \$9 million.

The Governor has also proposed to eliminate funding of the state's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Block Grants which currently fund only a handful of programs statewide. Just last June, a department spokesman for DSS was quoted in the Norwich Bulletin as saying, "The state recognizes the need to enhance teen pregnancy prevention efforts". What a difference a year makes—and yet teen pregnancy rates are once again on the rise and the media is laced with images of teen moms.

Unfortunately, the Governor's proposal is once again short-sighted. Eliminating funding of the state's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Block Grants will cost the state more in the long term.

I thank you for your time today and for the work you have ahead of you. Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lu MC et al., Elimination of public funding of prenatal care for undocumented immigrants in California: a cost/benefit analysis, *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 2000, 182(1, pt. 1):233-239.