

LOB Testimony: Wednesday, February 18, 2009

My name is Andrea Hunter and I am currently Program Manager for The Connection Inc. Supportive Housing for Families Program. I have been employed in the Human Service field for nineteen (19) years. The majority of my employment setting was residential treatment for substance abuse (teenagers, women with their children). I witnessed parents make positive changes in their lives and create a new start for them and their children. However, as they reached their optimum benefit and were ready to return to the community, a support program was non-existent. The women and their children without healthy options returned to neighborhoods and lived with partners or family members that undermined their recovery efforts. We hoped for a program that would provide support for these families in acquiring and maintaining housing, managing household finances, coordinating services for both parent and child(ren), assisting in furthering education and obtaining employment. The Supportive Housing for Families program was developed during my residential employment and it made an enormous difference in the lives of the women and their children who otherwise would have returned to unhealthy communities or household that would eventually undermine their recovery efforts and subsequently place them at high risk for recidivism. As a Case Manager with Supportive Housing I was able to have an eye witness account of the transformation in the lives of the families served and in the

services hoped for. Families having a place to call home and no longer having to sleep in shelters, doubled up with family members or in their vehicles. Families not longer faced with the threat of separation due to lack of housing. Families enjoying everyday life together post reunification. Children no longer hesitant to develop friendships with their school mates for fear they will need to relocate. Children showing marked improvements in their school performance. Parents involved with the school (attending school functions and education meetings). Parents maintaining steady employment. Parents further their education. Parents through connection to services maintain their recovery. Household finances being managed. Families, in general, feeling "normal" and good about being able to contribute to society. The long terms outcomes are as our families strengthen it creates an opportunity to break the cycle of child placement, substance abuse, and homelessness in the next generation.

Inadequate funding for Supportive Housing would create additional astronomical spending for foster care, medical care/hospitalizations, treatment programs, and incarceration. With satellite offices in Norwich, Danielson, Middletown, Waterbury, Torrington, Danbury, Manchester, Enfield, Hartford, Plainville, Bridgeport, Ansonia, and New Haven, we span across the state serving 500 families annually. As you review the need to cut the state budget I asked that you consider the positive impact that Supportive Housing for Families has had for the state of Connecticut and continue to support its efforts. Thank you for your time.