

**Testimony of Jody L. Rowell, LCSW, Advocate
Clifford W. Beers Guidance Clinic**

Madame Chair and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Jody Rowell. I am a clinical social worker and advocate for children and families in Greater New Haven. I am here today to ask you to stop the Governor's proposed cuts to the HUSKY children, the most vulnerable citizens in this State.

As an appointed member to the Medicaid Managed Care Council, I have fought long and hard with the other devoted members of the Council to ensure that the children in this State are given a chance to succeed by giving oversight and supporting policy changes to the HUSKY program to ensure best the possible scenario for fostering health and hope. Simply stated, the Governor's proposed cuts to HUSKY, SAGA and Medicare are short sighted.

It seems pound wise and penny foolish to implement most of the Governor's cuts to the these programs, because any cost benefit analysis would show you that these cuts lead to a minimum amount of savings in the very short term and a huge financial cost in the near term. I don't know how you to factor in the human cost, but I ask you not forget these are children on the other end of this "I won't raise taxes" year and the human cost is considerable.

Let me attempt to simply what just one of these cuts looks like on the ground. The Gov. has proposed putting mental health drugs for HUSKY children back on the preferred drug list.

About a year ago, the medications were exempted from the preferred drug list or from prior authorization because the hurdles set in place were so convoluted that many seriously mentally ill children went without their meds. In fact, several children whose caregivers were unable to maneuver through the prior authorization process in a timely manner,

ended up in the ER or in a higher level of care. The state had built in a 30-day temporary supply that was to be provided to the client if they did show without the prior authorization. In my 10 year history at Beers, I am not aware one of our clients walking away from a pharmacy with a 30 day supply during my ten years at Clifford Beers Clinic.

The cost to the state by these children going to the ER, as well as the cost shifting to pharmacies and the already underfunded community based services where fewer and fewer child psychiatrists are available to evaluate and prescribe these medications actually equals an increased cost to the taxpayers and is certainly not the savings it looks like on paper. We have been through this disaster and it seems silly to think the results will be different when we try it again. This example covers just one line item on the Gov's proposals to cut social services. Many of them come with the same cost burden.

Connecticut will be receiving \$1.3 billion from the federal government in stimulus payments specifically through enhanced Medicaid reimbursement. If we accept these monies but use it to fill the budget gap, are we really comfortable stripping away the already existing benefits under Medicaid for the most vulnerable of our citizens.

Thank you for your time.