

**Testimony of Cameo Johnson  
Children's Community Programs of CT Inc.  
Connecticut Children's Trust Fund, DSS  
Nurturing Families Network (West Rock)  
New Haven, CT. 06513 (203) 786-6403**

**Prepared for the Appropriation Committee: Wednesday, December 9,  
2009. The Governors proposed Deficit Mitigation Plan**

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Good morning. My name is Cameo Johnson, I am a concern young adult and first time father participating in New Haven, Nurturing Families Network, West Rock: program funded by the Children's Trust Fund, Department of Social Services.

I am presenting my testimony about the Nurturing Families Network Home Visiting for first time Mothers. I want to thank you for all that NFN have done for me. I been through so much in my life, and after being apart of this program I'm just not the same. I use to be selfish and I only thought about myself but my home visitor Latoya has taught me to think about my baby too. Latoya and this program have given so much hope for my future. They have provided me with things I know I wouldn't be able to afford on my own. The diapers that NFN are able to give me are so appreciated. I am able to take the money I save from not having to buy diapers, and get other things for my baby. Latoya has also given me information on what to do so I won't get pregnant again, at least not by accident. I obviously didn't really know much about it before. I wasn't ready to have my baby at first, but this program has help me become a good mother; I'm not perfect, but with this program I can only get better. Latoya was able to help me get to this point. I am so grateful to have someone like her in my life. I am also grateful for Nurturing Families Network, because they really do help and give much needed support.

Thanks Again....

**Testimony of Shanna Solomon  
Children's Community Programs of CT Inc.  
Connecticut Children's Trust Fund, DSS  
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Good morning. My name is Shanna Solomon, I am a young first time mother participating in New Haven, Nurturing Families Network, West Rock: program funded by the Children's Trust Fund, Department of Social Services .

I am writing to present my testimony about the Nurturing Families Network , Nurturing MOMS program for first time mothers. This agency has played a huge role in my life. It has helped me to become the best mother I can be and taught me how to meet my son's needs. I learned how to better myself for my child. Before I became involved in this agency, I was lost when it came to parenting. I thought it was in easy task, until I realize I really don't know what I'm doing. My home visitor has taught me useful knowledge that I continue to refer to. For example, no one has ever taught me the wrongs and rights when making a bottle. I use to warm my son's bottle in the microwave until my home visitor came into my life. I really need this agency, my son is not even one yet and he will start to learn new things in the next few years and I will need to know how to respond as his parent. The guidance has been a great help thus far. Having my home visitor to continue to guide me for the next four and a half years is a necessity for me. I already had trust issues and I am not one to open up to people easily. My home visitor Johneisha Dubose and I have created a great relationship and I am able to speak to her about anything concerning my child's needs and I trust her. She is always available when needed and I know that she cares about my family. I would like to continue to see this agency exist, If it were not for this agency who knows what may have happened to my child.

**Testimony of Richard T. Spears  
Children's Community Programs of CT Inc.  
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One of the most pervasive problems facing young adults who enter the juvenile justice system is drug and alcohol abuse, yet drug treatment is scarce for young adults in this country. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports that more than 1 million youths, ages 12 to 17, needed treatment for an illicit drug problem in 2003, but only one in 10 actually received help. According to a 2004 study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, treatment is even less available for young adults in the juvenile justice system—fewer than 3 percent of juveniles arrested who have substance abuse problems receive treatment. At least 6 out of 10 of these young adults entering the juvenile justice system are parents before the reach 18 years old. Our young people are in a great need of support and terminating this type of program or scaling it back would only further perpetuate this cycle we are trying to prevent. Our support to these parents is needed especially in a society that does not adequately educate or provide for our child and youth. A nation is only strong as its families and with out this approach will lose many generations of our children and youth.

So far, the main focus of President-elect Barack Obama's stimulus package has been on the infrastructure of bridges, highways and schools. But there is another kind of infrastructure that has been seriously neglected for a long time in this country: the human infrastructure of children and families. It is imperative that it be included in the stimulus efforts. Even before the massive job losses of the past months, one in five American children was growing up in poverty, a poverty that extends beyond food and housing, manifesting itself in gaps in language and social skills observable in children as young as 1 years old.

As a the clinical supervisor who visits many of these homes I recognize the substandard conditions these children are raised in and they need specialized care to prevent abused and neglected. I have seen firsthand what is missing in the lives of too many children and young parents. There are services and programs that work, but they have been possible only on a small scale. Studies show that millions of America's poor children are behind their better-off peers to a shocking extent by the time they reach kindergarten. Early childhood programs can close this gap - a gap that leads to low achievement in school, a widening disparity of competencies and the perpetuation of poverty.

State governments, the United Way and foundations are stretched in many directions and have been unable to help the populations in need. Most important, until now, there has been no national policy or vision that makes early childhood a priority. Even Head Start, the largest and most successful federal early childhood program, serves fewer than half of

the children who are eligible. So what would an effort to address the infrastructure that focuses on young children look like?

Many parents of young children need and want help with developmentally appropriate parenting skills. Young parents whose childhoods lacked good parenting are often unable to be effective as parents. Ignorance of the needs of babies and toddlers and the frustrations of caring for them with too few resources are major contributors to child abuse and neglect. There are, however, effective programs that promote good parenting and save children from devastating physical, developmental and social consequences. Many states including Connecticut have an agency called the Children's Trust Fund that directs prevention programs, so in some communities this effort is underway on a small scale. One effective model of prevention involves weekly home visits by trained personnel from late pregnancy to at least the child's second birthday to help young, inexperienced and resource-poor first-time mothers. The visiting professional models effective parenting, serves as a watchful observer and adviser, and links the parents to important community agencies, such as adult education and mental health services.

The home visitor forms a close and trusting relationship with the parents. Children whose parents have used these programs suffer fewer serious injuries, are more prepared for school entry and appear to have fewer problems as adolescents.

Each year in the United States, about half a million babies are born to at-risk first-time mothers who can be overwhelmed by the task of caring for children and would benefit from home visiting programs. Our programs are cost-effective! The most intensive CTF program (home visits through the Nurturing Families Network) cost just over \$3,000 per year. Compare this to \$30,000 per year for each substantiated DCF case, and over \$44,000 per year for each inmate in Connecticut's correctional system. Not only would children and families be helped, but nationally, there would be about 100,000 new jobs for home visitors, supervisors, program coordinators and others. We cannot turn our back on these families it would be sinful to allow this.

**Testimony of Shanique Williams  
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Good morning. My name is Shanique Williams, I am a concern young adult and first time mother participating in New Haven, Nurturing Families Network, West Rock: program funded by the Children's Trust Fund, Department of Social Services.

I am presenting my testimony about the Nurturing Families Network Home Visiting for first time Mothers. I can not thank NFN enough. I had my baby about a month ago and with out this program I'm not sure where I would be. I heard about this program from my boyfriend, he is a part of the fatherhood group. When I first started I had a really bad attitude, but that soon changed. I met with Richard Spears and Latoya Brown; they were very nice to me and patient. I use to think I knew everything when in all actuality, I knew nothing about being a mother. Although I use to give my home visitor Latoya attitude she never stopped coming to visit or calling to check on me. Latoya made sure I attended all my doctors' appointments and she brought me some information about smoking when you're pregnant which made me stop. I can't stress to you enough how much I need this program, and I am sure the other mothers feel the same. I was a hand follow and no one wanted to deal with me, this program has not only helped me learn to be a good mother for my child, it has helped me to become a better person and for that I thank you Nurturing Families Network, Thank you!