



THAMES VALLEY COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.
Serving Our Communities Since 1965

Deborah Monahan, Executive Director

TESTIMONY

December 9, 2009

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and ladies and gentleman of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Deborah Monahan and I am the Executive Director of the Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. serving 21 towns and cities in southeastern Connecticut.

I would like to express my strong opposition to the portion of the mitigation plan which directly impacts TVCCA's ability to provide direct services and case management to our low-income and working poor families – specifically the recommended reduction in the Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) Community Action Agency line of funding. The additional cuts recommended in the deficit mitigation plan to the State funded child care centers and Care4Kids are appalling.

TVCCA is seeing an increased demand for assistance to families with housing, food, and fuel challenges and crisis intervention - the highest levels we have ever seen. People who have never sought assistance from TVCCA before are coming to our door for help. Our energy assistance requests are already up 21.4% from 2008 (2009 is up 103% from 2007), and new customers have come to our agency not only for help paying their heating bills, but are requesting job search assistance, eviction prevention/foreclosure help, and food assistance to feed their families. These people are in desperate need of our crisis intervention support services. Our HSI workers are the front-line staff who provide these services.

An additional cut to the Human Services Infrastructure line item of 25% will diminish our ability to quickly and effectively serve those clients in need and in crisis. While clients will eventually be seen, the backlog due to the staffing cuts eminent in this recommended funding cut will make the wait for services much

longer and crisis intervention severely compromised. Please understand that a year ago many of these families had jobs, paid income taxes and never had to seek assistance.

The Governor's recommended \$3.9 million cut to the State funded child care centers and \$10.7 million cut to Care4Kids are simply unconscionable. Working poor families have long relied on state funded AFFORDABLE child care centers to care for their children in a high quality preschool environment while they work. To recommend such cuts could only further compromise those families ability to work and put these children in unsafe situations.

TVCCA serves over 700 children daily in our child care centers. We already see the impact of reduced funding from the Care4Kids cuts/closure. Our Care4Kids revenues will be reduced by more than \$300,000. To add on top of this Care4Kids cut another reduction will seriously impact affordable child care in Southeastern Connecticut. Centers need sustained adequate funding to care for children.

In addition, two of our centers, one in Norwich and Bayonet Street Center, New London received bonding from CHEFA (Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority) for construction and expansion. Those bonds need to be paid back over the next thirty years. If funding is dramatically reduced, those facilities could go into "default" and the State of Connecticut bond rating negatively impacted. How does TVCCA pay its obligations when the funding (State center funding and Care4Kids) for those obligations gets dramatically cut?

I understand that these are very challenging times and that tough fiscal decisions have to be made. CUTTING SERVICES THAT ARE BASIC NEEDS FOR FAMILIES IS NOT THE ANSWER.

I would like to thank the legislature, especially members of this committee, for your understanding of the importance of supporting TVCCA – and the work we do for our most vulnerable residents in our community. Your ongoing support has been crucial to our successes in serving those in need and in maintaining these basic safety net services for all families during the worst economic time in recent memory.