

Appropriations Committee

December 9, 2009

Testimony in support of the Nurturing Families Network

Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Galit Sharma. I am a Clinical Supervisor with the Nurturing Families Network (NFN) at the Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc. in New Haven. I urge you to vote against eliminating this vital program, as proposed in the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan.

The plan calls for a program reduction that would, in fact, eliminate the Nurturing Families Network entirely by cutting 90% of its funding. This is not only a "reduction"! The remaining 10% would clearly be insufficient to run even a few remaining sites and will set us ten years back in terms of program development and outcomes in the community.

The University of Hartford's Center for Social Research has been following the Nurturing Families for 14 years with impressive results. They report that-

- The rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect in high-risk families participating in Nurturing Families is significantly lower than state and national rates. Annual maltreatment rate for our families is, on average, only 3% compared to 20% for similar families not participating in this type of program.

This is an amazing finding!

- The immunization rate for two-year olds in NFN is 93% compared to 66% for two year olds with similar demographic background on Medicaid.
- A significant percentage of parents in NFN complete high school, become employed and move out of financial hardship.

The State can be proud to have a program like this one. maybe we can present it as a model to other states and turn it into a source of revenue for Connecticut instead of fighting for its very existence.

Pulling out our support would be devastating to many families and would come at a high price: Dr. Charles Super at the University of CT estimates that eliminating the Nurturing Families program will result in 484 additional cases of child abuse and neglect that will be referred to DCF in 2010. Their annual cost to the state is estimated at additional 14.5 million dollars. Additional funds will have to be allocated to support growing caseloads at the Department of Corrections, DMHAS, and other programs.

The Nurturing Families Network helps the most vulnerable families, and reaches as many as 4,000 of them every year. We are there for the mothers and fathers who have so few resources and so many barriers to accessing them. We are there to give them the tools and the support to alleviate some of the stress so closely associated with child abuse and neglect.

If our children are our future, there is no better time to support them than now.

Vote for them. Vote for the children.

Vote for the Nurturing Families Network, and say NO to the Governor's proposal.

Thank you for your time.

Galit Sharma

Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc.
131 Dwight St.
New Haven, CT 06511
Phone: (203) 624-2600 ext. 313
gsharma@cccch.org