

Good afternoon, my name is Kelley Traister, I am the Children's Education Partnership Manager for New Haven Home Recovery located at 153 East St. in New Haven, CT. I live at 43 North Benham Rd. in Seymour, CT and can be reached at (203)-492-4866. New Haven Home Recovery provides emergency shelter, homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing, supportive housing and transitional housing for single women and families as well as educational support programs for children which include, Family School Connection, Healthy Start and Search. I am here today to urge you to vote against the homeless line item rescissions and the education rescissions.

New Haven Home Recovery has been serving the most vulnerable populations in our state for the past 20 years. Over the past few years, we have seen and have been impacted by several small cuts to some of our programs, ranging from \$20,000 to nearly \$40,000. Over time, these small cuts have added up to a nearly \$407,000 gap in our operating budget. The funding gap that we have experienced, we have been able to fill in years past through extensive and successful fundraising efforts; in a good year we have successfully filled the gap. But, the economic conditions this year pose a much greater challenge to our organization as our generous donors are faced with their own financial challenges; will we be able to meet this budget deficit this year? We of course hope so but, we cannot rely on hope alone.

That being said, New Haven Home Recovery now faces a much larger budget gap with the proposed rescissions. With the DSS Homeless line item rescissions as well as the

proposed rescissions for the Children's Trust Fund, the 25% percent cuts would potentially add an estimated \$255,000 deficit to our overall budget; increasing our deficit to over \$662,000. We would have to rely on private funding to fill this gap. On a good year, we may raise about half of that amount. In this economic environment, it is near impossible to do so.

In the face of the economic situation of our state, this may not seem like a lot but, what would it mean for our agency and the families and children that we serve:

- It would mean fewer staff, less case management; less of the staff and resources that work with families to prepare them for independence and permanent housing. These services are crucial to the development of financial literacy skills for our families. After all, it is the hope that all individuals and families that come through the shelter system will be able to obtain permanent housing; to gain financial independence and will be able to sustain themselves outside of the shelter system. What will happen to these individuals and families without this essential guidance and support?
- It would mean cutting educational programs that support the academic success of children who are homeless and at risk of academic failure. These programs provide children with the necessary academic support to meet challenging academic standards. They also provide parents with the necessary education to empower them to become more involved in their child's education. Without these programs, children will be left to be influenced on the streets and parents will

have far fewer resources for support which will lead to higher police and DCF case loads.

- It would mean cut backs in shelter staff, potentially cutting back shelter hours to only allow for shelters to be open at night. Low staffing numbers in a shelter also poses serious health and safety concerns.
- It would mean the further destabilization of individuals and families who are already at the height of crisis when they enter into our programs; in a system that is already incredibly over stretched. Cutting services for these individuals and families will only make it more difficult for them to move out of the emergency shelter system; further taxing the system.

I received a call yesterday afternoon from a mother with a 5 year old son with special needs. They are currently seeking beds in an emergency shelter because they have no where else to go. For the past few weeks, they have been sleeping on the couches of friends and family members; staying somewhere different nearly every night. They have been homeless for two months, following an eviction due to the foreclosure of the house that they were living in. I have spent the past day and a half calling all of the family homeless shelters in this region of the state; seeking emergency shelter for this family. However, there are no beds available in ANY shelter in New Haven, Shelton, Bridgeport or Milford. What makes this case even more difficult to hear is that, this child is autistic, has cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder which ultimately means that he is medically fragile. He and his mother desperately need permanent housing but, without access to even an emergency shelter bed and the support services offered there, how will this

family become stable enough to move forward? We all know that we have more cases like this all over the state. What will happen if we create more stress to an already strained system?

Without the essential resources that New Haven Home Recovery provides, we will ultimately see this cycle continue, without the proper interventions for both mother and child. Cutting these funds would literally be cutting necessities that we take for granted on a daily basis; food, clothing, shelter and education. We cannot afford to find out how severely these cuts will impact our families; today tomorrow and for the rest of their lives. Please do not pass the homeless line item rescissions or proposed cuts to the Children's Trust Fund budget.