

Executive Director
Kelly Cronin

December 8, 2009

Board of Directors
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Jerry E. Attanasio

Retired Lieutenant
Samuel Beamon, Sr.

Commissioner
John Betkoski III

*David Boodoo

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Margaret Palomba

Janice Paul

Tara Shea

Beth Sieling M.D.

Tony Smith

Cyndi Sutherland

*non-voting youth member

Connecticut State Legislature
Appropriations Committee
Co-Chairs,
Senator Toni Harp
Representative John Geragosian

The Governor is asking you to eliminate funding for After School programs and Community Plans for Early Childhood. It is urgent that you do not support these cuts to the budget – it would fail the community.

Waterbury Youth Service System, Inc. (WYSS) has amassed vast experience in providing opportunities, supportive services and programming that encourages positive youth development in the last thirty-one years. WYSS currently offers a variety of after school programming and is a partner in a highly effective after school, academic enrichment program for inner-city, at risk middle school students. Some important statistics about Waterbury's families that should make this decision not to cut the critical funding easy for you:

- 19.6% Poverty rate (4th highest in the state)
- 34% of Waterbury's children live below the federal poverty level
- 13% Unemployment level
- 76% of the children in Waterbury's Public Schools qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 73% of the children in Waterbury's Public Schools are minorities (44% Hispanic)

WYSS's data shows that the City of Waterbury middle/high school student populations exhibit the most need and show the most successful outcomes from appropriate after school programming. At the present time, 57% of Waterbury's children said they don't feel safe; 70% of Waterbury's children resort to violence when resolving conflict. The goals of some after school programs are to provide youth who have been identified as having academic and/or behavioral issues and needs with academic enrichment opportunities, as well as additional activities designed to complement their regular academic program. While others target low income and at risk youth, we offer extensive programming that is non-targeted and open to any youth who desires to participate. All programs are offered with a focus on developing self-esteem and creating interpersonal relationships through learning and/or refining skills and enrichment/leadership activities.



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Programs that empower youth through leadership: by actively addressing the problem of underage drinking; by gaining knowledge in violence prevention through community involvement; by educating and preparing youth for the future by acquiring business and trade skills; incentive based programs where disadvantaged youth make a link between their education and their life needs; to learn life skills, team building activities, and anger management; computer programs to provide educational tools for all participants; programs assisting working parents by providing a safe environment. All this is after school programming.

The need for effective after school programming cannot be overstated.

We urge you to vote to keep the \$5M funding for After School programs and the funding for the Community Plans for Early Childhood.

Sincerely,



Kelly Cronin
Executive Director
Waterbury Youth Service System, Inc.

