

December 8, 2009

Dear Governor Rell, Senator Williams, and esteemed members of the CT Legislature,

My heart is heavy and the time is short, to respond to the current Deficit Mitigation Plan. I am a parent of identical twin sons with significant and lifelong disabilities. My professional career spans 30 years working with children and adults having developmental disabilities. For nearly a decade, I have attempted to advocate for and support families like mine, as The CT Family Support Network Northeast Regional Coordinator.

In all my years of professional and personal life experience, I have never known a time in which families are operating at such a level of despondency and defeat. The parents I'm seeing and hearing from are telling horrific stories of hopelessness, despair, and unsurpassed grief. These incredibly vulnerable constituent families are struggling just to get by in their day-to-day lives. Many have lost their jobs; some have lost their homes; others have dissolved their marriages, and what happens to the children? I am surrounded by poverty and a neediness which is unprecedented in my lifetime.

When I see plans to cut program funding and close offices which attempt to highlight need and ameliorate suffering for families like mine, I am incredulous that a responsible state leadership would even consider balancing the Budget on the backs of CT's most compromised children and families.

You must not accept proposals to eliminate the Commission on Children, cut funding to the Children with Special Healthcare Needs Program and the Office of the Child Advocate, or suspend the Voluntary Services Program. In truth, children and families need every existing program and service which has been available to them, and more.

There must be other ways to bridge the gaps we must close to bring our state back to responsible solvency. How is it that we can be documented as one of the richest states in the nation, and yet we would turn our backs on helping those who need help the most?

We are real families, with children who have inordinately complex needs. We cannot do it alone. We must not bear CT's financial burdens; the loads we carry are far too heavy, even on the best of days. Be cognizant of the voices that are

too weak to cry out for your support and compassion. For each and every testimony given by representatives like me, there are hundreds of families relying on you to accept our plea on their behalf. Please do what is right.

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