

***Dear Governor Rell,***

I am compelled to write as I have had the opportunity to review your proposed Deficit Mitigation Plan. As a citizen, a parent of a child with autism, and Co-chair of the CT Family Support Council I am speechless at this proposal and gravely concerned as to the level of devastation that this plan will have on Connecticut families. While we all know and appreciate the demands for realism during these troubled times, achievement for the whole cannot be found on the backs and within the burdens of Connecticut families.

Clearly, over the course of Connecticut's history, entities such as the Office of the Child Advocate and the Commission on Children have been created as a result of significant unmet need and devastating outcomes experienced by our families and most vulnerable citizens. And while the current fiscal challenges require us to make difficult decisions, it is now more critical than ever that the State preserves and protects the basic interests of our children. In current time, and for the foreseeable future, families are facing a depth of crisis that has not been seen in decades and our children need us to stand strong with and for them as they cannot, by the sheer nature of who they are, do it on their own.

I cannot underscore enough the impact that the Office of the Child Advocate and the Commission on Children has on families each and every day. We know that many Connecticut families are struggling and that is unfortunately likely to continue. However, every family reached by these offices, hundreds of them, are living in what all of us would agree are the most desperate of circumstances. Gravely ill children, many with lifelong disabilities, often without economic advantages or an independent ability to meaningfully and effectively navigate a far too complex system that promises in the most fundamental of ways to assist in accessing what is so basic to all of us.

Further, the impacts on healthcare, access, cuts to health programs such as CSHCN and others, and the reduction in on-going support services outlined within this Deficit Mitigation Plan creates a streamline to crisis that defies all logic for Connecticut and its citizens.

**Being a voice for those struggling to find theirs is an incredible duty and persistent responsibility that is shared between advocates and lawmakers. We already see countless negative outcomes for families from an overburdened system that simply can't respond. We cannot move in a direction as a State where we dismantle vital supports for families. We must continue to put the needs of families and children before all else as this is our future.**

**Robyn Trowbridge**

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**Co-Chair CT Family Support Council**