

**TESTIMONY OF ANA M. FLAMENGO, MPA  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR, FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
IN OPPOSITION TO H.B. NO. 6386 AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION  
OF LEGISLATION RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION  
AND IN SUPPORT OF EXPANSION OF FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS**

**MARCH 4, 2009**

The Family Support Center is based on the premise that through the provision of evidence-based services to youth and their families engaged in status type offenses, i.e. truancy, running away from home, beyond control of the parents or school system, that these youth will be diverted from becoming involved in the Juvenile Court System. This intervention in the lives of these youth and their families effectively stabilizes the family unit, identifies specific behavioral based interventions for the youth, and assesses and advocates for the child's educational needs. The program targets boys/girls aged 11 – 15 who are identified status offenders with escalating behaviors that do not pose a significant threat to the public safety, but are engaged in a variety of high risk behaviors.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to write on behalf of opposing the House Bill 6386 and to support the addition of 6 more Family Support Centers in Connecticut. I urge you to pass this important legislation. This legislation will help improve the quality of life for the families and children of Connecticut. The FSC's help families improve and have a better life for themselves and their children. Through the support of the FSC, families are empowered to work with their children and serve as their own advocate. The families served by the Waterbury FSC, receive a wide arrange of services to address their families individual needs. It is unfair to deny the other children of Connecticut access to the services the FSC offers. The FSC offers screening and assessment (mental health, substance abuse, family dynamics, strength and resiliency factors), crisis intervention, family mediation, educational assessment and advocacy, ~~mental health and substance abuse treatment services including gender specific interventions,~~ access to respite services through the CARE Program, and access to intensive in-home service models including MST, MDFT and IICAPS. Services are provided Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. with weekend programming available and 24 hour crisis intervention services available seven days per week.

The FSC staffing consists of a Program Director, a Clinical Coordinator, 2 Case Coordinators, an educational consultant, an aftercare worker and an administrative assistant. All staff are highly educated and well trained in all FSC treatment modalities, enabling us to effectively decrease youths Court involvement, improve family functioning, improve educational functioning and increase resiliency factors.

The Family Support Center has witnessed many improvements in the life of youth it serves. One success story is of a youth which had received numerous services in the past which were all unsuccessful. This youth completed the Voice's group at the FSC which helped her deal with past traumatic events. Voices is an eighteen session, gender-specific curriculum, designed to give young women the opportunity to explore who they are, in an environment that fosters a sense of empowerment and support. Voices encourage girls to seek and celebrate their "true selves" by giving them a safe space, encouragement, structure, and support to embrace their important journey of self-discovery. The program advocates a strength-based approach that helps girls to identify and apply their power and voices as individuals and as a group. The focus is on issues that are important in the lives of adolescent girls, from modules about self and connecting with others, to exploring healthy living and the journey ahead. Though a variety of therapeutic approaches, including psych-educational, cognitive behavioral, expressive arts and relational therapy, the youth learn how to cope with daily challenges. The youth completed individual counseling offered at the FSC. Her academic progress was monitored on a weekly basis through school visits. The youth's behavioral issues at school decreased while she was involved with the Family Support Center. She was also able to maintain passing grades for the 2007-2008 school year. The youth was accepted into Job Corp in mid-October. Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 through 24 get a better job, make more money, and take control of their lives. On Monday, October 27, 2008, she officially left home for Job Corp in Bangor, ME. While at Job Corp, she plans to obtain her GED, her driver's license, and certificate to become a Certified Nurse Aide.

I want to thank you again for this opportunity to discuss an issue which is important not only to the families and their children but also to the citizens of CT. Improving the quality of life for the FWSN population will benefit the Connecticut community at large. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Respectfully submitted,

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