

**TESTIMONY BY ERIN McCARTHY, CLINICAL SUPERVISOR,
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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN -- February 26, 2009

**RE: H.B. 5144, AAC AN APPROPRIATION TO EXPAND THE NURTURING
FAMILIES NETWORK**

I am writing to express my support of House Bill No. 5144 - AN ACT CONCERNING AN APPROPRIATION TO EXPAND THE NURTURING FAMILIES NETWORK. I believe it is in the best interest of the families we serve throughout the state of Connecticut to expand the Nurturing Families Network by providing program services to parents who have an income at or below the federal poverty level.

My professional background affords me the opportunity to work with children and families for many years – first as a Department of Children and Families social worker, then as a family and child therapist, and now as the Clinical Supervisor of the Nurturing Families Network Program at the Hospital of Saint Raphael. While working in this field, I have come to realize that there is a great void in the educational and support options available to parents that are not involved with the Department of Children and Families, the court system, mental health and/or substance abuse programs. On a regular basis, social workers, pediatricians, midwives, and obstetricians call us seeking services that offer support, education and case management for families that are in urgent need. These families show so much strength despite facing overwhelming life stressors. The unfortunate consequence of their strength is there are no systems set up to support their needs as parents, their struggles to meet their personal goals, and the challenges raising a child can bring while living at or below the federal poverty level.

There is a wealth of documentation that supports the disparity between children who grow up in poverty without any educational programs that directly correlates to that of poor outcomes in the areas of school readiness, access to regular and quality health care, abuse and neglect, and later involvement in the mental health care system. Unfortunately the statistics reflect a greater likelihood that parents living in poverty will abuse or neglect their children due to a lack of education, information, and support.

The Nurturing Families Network Program is an established program that addresses these issues and improves child and family outcomes overall. The Nurturing Families Network Program provides the framework for successful planning, coordination, delivery, education, and development of the whole family. It is proven that with education, support, and resources, families and communities can thrive. The Nurturing Families Network Program is structured in such a way that these families can be easily identified and their participation in the program can be incorporated with a minimal amount of work by program staff.

The Nurturing Families Network is an evidence-based program that can greatly shift the landscape of poverty and children outcomes as we know it. The above paragraph represents the strong benefits of this program and how it can improve the lives of families served. We feel that

it is important to enhance the program's capacity to accommodate more of Connecticut's families.

I would like to thank you for raising House Bill 5144, An Act Concerning an Appropriation to Expand the Nurturing Families Network and urge passage of this bill.