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National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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**Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing  
2/11/10**

Good evening, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marcia Bok and I am testifying tonight on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers – Connecticut Chapter. So much has already been said about the budget, that there is little that is new to say. So I simply want to limit my remarks to a few programs within the Department of Social Services and the Department of Children and Families – not because these are necessarily the most important, but as a social worker for many years, I think the cuts of these programs need to be discussed again and again. Today, I want to emphasize preserving and strengthening families.

First, I want to comment about cuts in programs that enhance women's ability to achieve self-sufficiency and support their families. It is hard enough to get a job these days so that additional obstacles create impossible barriers. This includes, first and foremost, adequate child care services. There is absolutely no predictability and security in the Care4Kids program. I can't understand this. Adequate and affordable child care is so absolutely a basic need. Then there is transportation to employment. I've always been struck by the fact that poor women generally don't live where the jobs are. How do you get to Westfarms Mall to work if you live in Hartford and don't have a car? It's not impossible, but it's not easy. And finally, I can never understand the resistance to providing paid sick days. That is totally discriminatory to low-wage, hourly workers. We are always disdaining poor women – blaming them for being poor. Sometimes we act like it's a sin for the government to provide help. Many of us live off the government, but nobody faults those of us who are middle class.

With regard to DCF, we are working hard every day to make the child welfare system more responsive to children, their families, and societal needs. That is our goal. We are trying to organize services more effectively and efficiently through systems of care, where there is collaboration and community involvement; we want parents and local communities to be decision-makers; and we want to preserve and strengthen families. Before programs are cut, these should be how programs are measured. We want to be outcome oriented. Promoting the family voice, promotes good families. I also want to comment briefly on raise the age. Again, if we are outcome oriented we need to fund 16 and 17 year olds in the juvenile justice system.

So, the bottom line, I think you will agree, is strengthening families. Anything that detracts from that goal is probably not good for Connecticut. Anything that enhances that goal makes Connecticut a safer and better place to live. How can we achieve these goals? Revenue enhancement – from those who can afford it – that strikes me as a fair idea. Thank your very much for listening.