



NURTURING FAMILIES NETWORK

February 11, 2010

Good evening Chairman and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Michelle Afanador and I am a home visitor with the Nurturing Families Network (NFN) at the Fair Haven Community Health Center in New Haven. I am here today to urge you to vote against the Governor's proposed budget cuts that would virtually eliminate the Nurturing Families Network. NFN's valuable child abuse prevention programs provide parenting education, home visiting and parenting groups to **the** most vulnerable populations. The families I work with face linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers to accessing the critical services they need.

Nurturing Families Network is an evidence-based program, and 15 years of research has demonstrated that NFN significantly reduces child abuse and neglect. The home visiting program serves almost 2000 high-risk families annually.

The devastating cuts proposed by the Governor are deep, will hurt people, and directly impact the well-being of our children and their future!

As a home visitor, I provide comprehensive parenting education, and I also:

- Connect families to needed community services
- Support pregnant and parenting teens to complete high school or obtain their GED.

We are part of the Fair Haven Community Health Center which allows me to coordinate care for my clients.

- I help teens make and keep prenatal appointments. In turn, I find my clients' children have healthier outcomes.
- In helping my clients connect with their health care provider, I am decreasing unnecessary and costly emergency room visits.
- Also, 100% of the children in our program are up to date on their immunizations.

Our program is effective, addresses serious gaps in the health care system and is desperately needed.

The stories of the moms, dads and children in our program allow you to fully appreciate the value of NFN.

A 21-year-old mom who is now working on her human service certificate and is a positive influence in her daughter's life.

The 19-year-old first-time father who proudly and enthusiastically greets his home visitor at the door, holding his GED certificate and says, "Thank you, look what I did!"

A 16-year-old mom in DCF custody who was never nurtured as a child tells her home visitor that it is because of her consistent and dedicated involvement that she is growing confident in parenting her 4-month-old son.

In closing, I know that solving Connecticut's fiscal crisis will not be easy. I urge you, however, not to sacrifice our children when making difficult decisions to balance the budget. Please consider the devastating effect that eliminating NFN will have on our children and families across the state.

Thank you.

*Michelle Afanador
Home Visitor
Nurturing Families Network
Fair Haven Community Health Center*