

February 11, 2010

Good evening, I am Marcia Hughes, the assistant director at the Center for Social Research. I am testifying to ask for your active support in defeating Governor Rell's proposed budget cuts for the state's lead department for the prevention of child abuse and neglect - the Connecticut Children's Trust Fund.

Research and evaluation conducted on these programs by the Center for Social Research at the University of Hartford have shown that the programs of the Connecticut Children's Trust Fund (CTF) are working:

Annualized rates of maltreatment for families receiving home visitation services in Connecticut during the past 8 years have ranged from a little over 1% to a little over 6% (Nurturing Families Network Annual Outcome Reports, Center for Social Research). This is well below the 20-25% average seen in similarly high-risk families who don't receive such services (Murphy et al., 1985; Stevens-Simon et al., 2001).

Many children and families in Connecticut who are typically cut off from institutions are connected to such vital services as medical homes, child care, evaluation services, and early education programs. There is documentation, data, and reports (see, for example, *Help Me Grow* Annual Reports, Center for Social Research) that show there are thousands of children in Connecticut per year who are linked to services and resources essential for positive development. It is the programs of the Children's Trust Fund that perform this critical function.

Moreover, families with children in the early elementary grades, kindergarten through third grade - who are already showing signs of drop-out - are receiving education in their homes on

the importance of parent involvement in their child's education. It is a program of the Children's Trust Fund, working in 5 school systems throughout Connecticut that delivers these services – and again, these service and outcome data are well-documented (see *Family-School Connection Annual Reports*, Center for Social Research).

A policy brief released in January by the Partnership for America's Economic Success (managed by the Pew Center On The States) highlights that it is exactly these type of programs that *reduce* costs (www.ParternshipForSuccess.org):

- In the short run, money is saved in annual child abuse- and neglect-related costs such as medical costs (e.g., low birth weight), hospitalizations, and law enforcement costs.
- In the long run, growing a skilled workforce depends on investment in human capital. Providing early education and parent support increases school test scores, graduation rates, college attendance, job readiness and earnings. Investing in the first five years of life is the most powerful time to develop productive members of society.

Everybody loses when we cut programs that provide children with a strong development start – society and taxpayers especially. Budget decisions must therefore prioritize the programs of the Children's Trust Fund. These programs, that invest in early childhood and are backed by extensive research and evaluation, develop our human capital and ultimately rebuild the economy. Maintaining these services is, of course, the ethical thing to do, but it is also smart business. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marcia Hughes, Ph.D., Assistant Director

Tim Black, Ph.D., Director

Meredith Damboise, M.A., Research Associate

