

Testimony – 2/11/2010

Good evening. I want to thank the Legislators present for giving me this opportunity and for taking the time to listen. My name is David Parsons. I work as a Social Worker at the Department of Social Services and have been a State Employee for 22 years. I am also the Recording Secretary for AFSCME Local 2663 which represents nearly 2600 State Employees who work in a variety of State Agencies meeting the Human Service needs of their clients.

Connecticut has a long history of meeting the needs of its residents. During these difficult financial times it is even more important to continue to provide services that help our residents meet their most basic needs. These services can provide safety, or support to maximize independence, and in some cases the medical care, food, and shelter that are needed for daily existence.

I believe that State programs and services can either be viewed through the prism of policy or through the prism of people. I want to share my perspective through the prism of people. In my role as a Social Worker at the Department of Social Services my days vary depending on the needs of the individuals that are requesting help from the State. I may work with a person who as a result of a brain injury or physical injury or disease can no longer independently perform activities like eating, toileting or bathing without assistance. I may help an elder who has been neglected, exploited, or abused. I may help a victim of domestic violence develop a safety plan or relocate to a safe setting. I may explore options for a family who has become homeless because of the loss of income. These various services are directly related to State programs.

The loss of income by Connecticut residents has resulted in a significant growth in the numbers of people relying on the State for assistance. Many of these people have never utilized the State's help before, but knew that the help was available when it was needed. Whether the programs provided the types of services that I mentioned before or whether they help with purchasing food, supplementing income for the unemployed, or offering affordable medical insurance they are there to help people with basic needs and should not be considered unnecessary and expendable.

I want to encourage you to explore additional revenue streams rather than cutting programs. Over recent years the tax rates of Connecticut's wealthiest residents have been reduced by nearly 50%. I find it difficult to understand the logic of reducing tax rates for individuals with more than sufficient resources and then looking to cut programs that assist the neediest and most vulnerable residents of the State in order to balance the budget. I ask that you look at these programs not just as line items but consider them through the prism of people and remember that those people are Connecticut residents that are looking to the State for help.