



ESTABLISHED 1659

CITY OF NORWICH

CONNECTICUT

**Testimony of Angelo Callis LMFT,  
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H. B. No. 5148 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE JUDICIAL BRANCH.  
February 26, 2010**

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee: My name is Angelo Callis and I am a Connecticut-licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with Norwich Youth and Family Services in Norwich, Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to give this testimony in support of H.B. No. 5148 which would restore funding for Juvenile Justice services, especially family Support Centers.

In my career in human services I have worked in psychiatric hospitals, residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed adolescents and as a DCF protective service worker. In all of these institutions I have witnessed the heartbreak that children suffer, and the cost which society pays, when families fail. These costs are far-reaching and pervasive. We see it in the costs of drug and alcohol addiction, crime, homelessness, mental illness, and in prisons. **Our best and most economical intervention is a strong and healthy family.**

I am very fortunate to now work at a Youth Service Bureau, which performs some of the functions that a Family Resource Center would. Through my experience and research, I can attest that excellent, supportive services – including careful assessment and case management, therapeutic counseling, positive youth development activities in the after-school hours and other times, mentoring, and educational advocacy, among others – **provide youth and families with the very best outcome measures**. The evidence of the effectiveness of these services were so compelling that this legislative body changed the mandates of the juvenile court system and established Family Resource Centers in many communities, where they have been very effective (**81% of those involved showed no further system involvement**). While our YSB provides some of these services and functions, there is still a gap and need for additional services – the FWSN Advisory Board estimates that there are more than 100 children and youth that are going un-served, or under-served, every year. Each of these young people is at risk of cycling downward into delinquency.

It is unfair and economically unwise to only provide proven and valuable services to a portion of our children. How can we tell some children that they have value and others that they are not valued? That is the message that not funding these Centers will send.

In Eastern Connecticut, first through the LIT and now through the LIST, we have formed a far-reaching and comprehensive coalition to provide a wide range of services to area children and families. Service providers have historically worked collaboratively and systemically to create new and comprehensive services in our community. We believe that with funds to support and expand already existing services, we can create an equally effective Family Resource Center system, without having to lay one brick, thus realizing a great cost savings.

Thank you for time and patience, and please send the message that all of kids are of value.