



Shaping Our Children's School Success

Middletown School Readiness Council

**Testimony Presented to the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
February 11, 2010**

Senator Donald Williams, President Pro Tempore; Leonard Fasano, Minority Leader Pro Tempore; Christopher G. Donovan, Speaker of the House; Lawrence F. Cafero, Jr., Minority Leader; Senator Toni Harp; Representative John Geragosian; and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on *H.B. 5018, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011.*

The Governor's 2011 budget proposes that Connecticut's Care4Kids Program suffer a considerable loss of funds. Care4Kids is a critical component of child care in Connecticut, subsidizing child care costs for low- to moderate- income families, many of whom would be unable to obtain safe and affordable child care for their children without this assistance. The Governor has recommended that a reduction of 12% (\$11.5 million) be made to Care4kids in the 2011 budget. This reduces total funding for the program to just over \$84.4 million. As a result of this decrease, fewer families will receive subsidized child care. Low-income working parents may be unable to work or may leave children in situations where they do not have appropriate care and supervision. The loss of funding will also result in layoffs at and closings of child care centers, further increasing Connecticut's already high unemployment rate. An \$11.5 million funding reduction will not only harm Connecticut's children and families, but will have a negative affect on Connecticut's economy.

The Governor's budget proposal for FY 2011 would eliminate the Commission on Children. The Commission analyzes children's policies and writes a Children's Stock Portfolio highlighting state prevention programs and policies that produce excellent child outcomes. The Commission develops a family civics initiative that teaches parents how to advocate for children. The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) is in 16 cities and towns and replicated in other states. Graduates invest more than 1.5 million volunteer hours for children. The Commission on Children locates funding opportunities that bring federal dollars to Connecticut, including: the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Contingency Fund, valued at \$53 million; the Food Stamp Employment Training (FSET) 50/50 match fund, valued at \$2.5 million; and Medicaid payment for home visitation, valued at \$7 million. It would be foolish to eliminate an agency that produces important prevention programs and this kind of return on investment.

The Governor's budget proposal includes a nearly 51% reduction in the Children's Trust Fund. The Connecticut Children's Trust Fund is the state's lead agency for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The Trust Fund (including the Parent Trust) invests in several major initiatives that help ensure the positive growth and development of children by helping to support and strengthen families – especially those for whom the risk of abuse and neglect is very real. Trust Fund programs reach more than 17,000 families every year. Researchers at the University of Hartford Center for Social Research have found that the rate of substantiated abuse for the high-risk families in the Children's Trust Fund Nurturing Families Network home-visiting program was substantially lower than for high-risk

mothers not receiving home visitation services. In Middletown, we are finding a greater need for these services than we can meet. A significant reduction in funds would be devastating to the children and families in need of this program.

We cannot rely on further spending cuts in this budget. Dollars cut already outnumber revenues raised 3:1. Because of the national recession, people's needs are going up dramatically as the state's resources to meet those needs are falling. And spending cuts result in job losses.

We need a balanced approach that addresses the state's structural revenue problem with a revenue solution. Specifically, we urge you to support the revenue options proposed by the Better Choices for Connecticut coalition, including closing corporate tax loopholes, evaluating corporate tax breaks to see whether Connecticut is actually getting an economic return on its investment, delaying reductions in the estate tax, and increasing income taxes on households most able to pay.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our comments.

Respectfully submitted,

The Middletown School Readiness Council

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