

Testimony Opposing the Governor's Proposal to Reduce Funding for School-Based Health Centers in the Department of Public Health Budget

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Appropriations Committee

February 18, 2010

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am a Senior Policy Fellow with Connecticut Voices for Children, a statewide research-based policy think tank that works to advance public policies that benefit the state's children, youth and families.

I am submitting this written testimony in **opposition** to the Governor's budget recommendation to cut **\$1.2 million** in funding to school-based health centers for FY 11. This comes on the heels of the FY 10 rescissions of \$522,032.

Our state can be very proud of the fact that we have more than 75 school-based health centers. According to the Connecticut Association of School-Based Health Centers, they serve over 44,000 children and adolescents annually. The Governor's budget recognizes that the Centers provide comprehensive services that include physical, mental health, and oral health care for students in pre-K through high school. They often serve children who have no health coverage or other access to care. We all know by now that children need immunizations, regular check-ups and a regular source of care. School-based centers are cost-effective and provide a common sense approach to serving medically underserved students.

And of course we know full well what will happen if these much needed dollars are eliminated from the Centers' budgets: The Centers will lay off staff, reduce hours of operation, and as a result provide fewer critically needed services to vulnerable children. These cuts will hurt those kids.

There is a better way. Rather than relying on spending cuts that damage the state's economy and hurt our ability to invest in the future, we need a more balanced approach that includes revenues. As in other states, this crushing national recession is causing big problems for families. Just as people's needs are rising dramatically, the revenues the state has to meet those needs are falling. More than ever today, people need access to quality health care, child care, jobs, and education. So we have to fill that gap between people's growing needs and what it takes to meet them.

Please reject the Governor's proposal to reduce funding to school-based health centers and help our children maintain access to critically health care services. CT Voices and others are ready, willing and able to offer solutions that don't jeopardize the health and well-being of our kids. Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit this testimony and feel free to contact me for additional information.