

Sen. Toni Harp, Rep. John Geragosian, Sen. Edith Prague, Rep. Gail Hamm, Rep. Peter Villano, Sen. Don Williams and Rep. Chris Donovan.

I am writing to implore you to consider *very carefully* the ramifications of making cuts to the Parent Trust Fund, Parent Leadership Initiatives or the Commission on Children.

I am a former member of the Cromwell Board of Education and PLTI graduate.

So often, when economic realities hit the government, the first people affected by funding cuts are the weakest. Parent Leaders do not have the deep pockets of lobbyists. Things, such as parent education, that everyone feels good about when the coffers are full are easy to place on the chopping block when times are tough, because it's not considered a necessity.

However, as a PLTI graduate, I cannot stress enough the importance of educating our parents and getting them involved. Encouraging citizen participation in policy-making is invaluable. Teaching parents how to advocate for their children within the framework of the law encourages parents to take more responsibility for their lives and the lives of their children. This saves money in a myriad of ways. The more educated a populace, the less likely they will need government services.

For example, when I attended PLTI, we had to create a community project in order to graduate. The staggering amount of volunteer hours generated by PLTI as parents work on projects to benefit communities has a real, intrinsic value. Cutting PLTI will have an impact on communities. Municipalities will somehow have to make up for the volunteer hours lost. Let's not cut off our noses to spite our face.

There is a groundswell of discontent with government these days. People are hurting and the State is in serious financial trouble. It's a tough job to balance the budget and keep services. I know, I've been there on a local level. But it can be done.

It is your job, as our elected representatives to do the hard work, *think things through* and take a tough stance when needed. We all know there is waste- it's just a matter of finding it. If we all work hard I'm sure we can find substantial ways to reduce our expenditures without hurting our smallest and most vulnerable, just because their voices are the quietest.

Thank you for your time.

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