



February 11, 2010

Present To: Human Services Sub-Committee, Appropriations Committee

Testimony Respectfully Submitted by
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RE: Governor's Proposed Budget Adjustments
30% Cut to the Children's Trust Fund
Elimination of the Children's Health Info-line
SAGA cuts

Thank you for allowing this opportunity today to present my concerns regarding the Governor's recently proposed budget adjustments. First, while I certainly am pleased that programs such as Healthy Start were level funded, I feel the pendulum swing completely in the other direction with cuts such as those proposed to the Children's Trust Fund and the elimination of the Children's Health Info-line. Herein lies the debate environment that gets created: One program versus another. While I am not suggesting the legislature pass budgets without review or changes, I think we are doing ourselves a dis-service by pitting programs against one another simply to see who will win in the pie splitting game.

Both Healthy Start and the Nurturing Families Network have been evaluated by independent, well-respected institutions or individuals. Both work with target populations to reach goals that have overall been identified as priorities within this state. Yet a 30% cut to the Nurturing Families Network would dismantle the program. I could no longer continue to offer the program close to how it currently operates. On the other hand, a 10% cut could be workable with some trimming and creativity for a few years. For example, moving staff from 40 hours per week to 35 hours per week could save 8%, but also 3 staff positions with healthcare and

retirement benefits. It also means services continue in our community and 3 adults can remain employed for their families.

While I am not as intimately involved with the Children's Health Info-line budgets or staffing, I can't imagine there is not some way of cutting back without eliminating this program. Surely we would prefer families remain on hold longer or have 1 hour per day less time to call than to have nobody at all to solve some of the challenges faced by consumers in HUSKY.

In conclusion, I am here today to ask that we look at common sense and equitable solutions to this problem. There should be non-untapped funding stream or untouched funded. We can't choose to keep state employees whole and lay off every privately employed staff member who works on a grant program. We can't increase co-pays for patients on HUSKY, but not do so for those who have state or local health insurance. People that I talk to are prepared for cuts and encourage that a decision come sooner than later. The anxiety around the total elimination of certain services and the never-ending debate is what becomes unbearable.

Thank you for your consideration and for the anticipated hard work ahead.