

Testimony on behalf of the Children's Trust Fund

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak to all of you today.

My name is Lydia Lopez, Children's Program Supervisor and Child Advocate for the Interval House, a domestic violence program in Hartford. I am here in support of the Children's Trust Fund.

It is important that you vote not to cut the funding for the Children's Trust Fund because these funds provides critical prevention services such as one on one counseling, support groups, safety planning, education and advocacy efforts for innocent children who are victims of domestic violence.

Children's Trust Fund provides funding for Interval House to facilitate a group called Mothersshare.

Mothersshare is a weekly parent education program with ongoing components of support and advocacy. The purpose of this program is to help mothers who have experienced domestic violence to understand the impact on their children and themselves; to teach mothers to talk and to listen to their children about their experience of the violence; to encourage children's resiliency, and to support mother's in strengthening their relationships with their children. Topics include: Understand the effects of Domestic Violence on children, learning ways to talk to and listen to children about their experience of Domestic Violence, working on safe non-violent relationships with their child's father, learning and practicing new problem-solving techniques with their children, and finding support and counseling for herself and her children, if needed.

While moms are participating in their support group, a children's group, called KIDSARE, takes place which complements the session with age appropriate activities.

KIDSHARE is a safe environment provided for the children where they begin to feel safe expressing themselves and working through the trauma they have experienced. With structure activities, modeling, support, and counseling along with the occasional party children are given the tools to make healthier choices.

Within the support group, children receive age-appropriate education and support. The groups are separated according to age, and address such issues as:

What is domestic violence?	I am Special
Abuse is not okay	Self-esteem
It's okay to be angry	Feelings
What is violence?	Choices
Why is it unacceptable behavior?	Assertiveness
Safety Planning	Moving

I would like to end my testimony with this visual, "A mom with 3 children ages 13, 6 and 2, who has been continuously isolated from family and friends, feeling powerless financially, and the children blaming mom for the abuse by dad who has become life threatening for everyone in the family".

If these funds are cut, the chances for this family survival will become detrimental.

We all know that there are many other children who can also benefit from this program services as well. Cutting the funding would be a step in the wrong direction.

Again, thank you for your time.