

TESTIMONY OF KATHLEEN G. NOVAK TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE REGARDING THE
GOVERNOR'S BUDGET DEFICIT MITIGATION PLAN

March 11, 2010

My name is Kathleen G. Novak and I am a former clinical supervisor and program manager of the Nurturing Families Site at VNA Healthcare, Inc. in Hartford. This site, along with St. Mary's Hospital in Waterbury, was one of the first two home visitation programs of its kind in the entire state. It was and IS Hartford Hospital's only home visitation program to prevent child abuse and neglect. I find it reprehensible that it and 13 others in our state will close its doors if the Governor's latest Budget Mitigation Plan passes.

In Hartford and New Haven, 14 current sites would be cut from the poorest neighborhoods and communities in our state. Social problems abound in these two cities, and thus those who are most vulnerable to the perils of economic hardship would be discriminated against. In essence, they will be blamed for their situations and forced to face life without the supports other communities with more resources are afforded. If the Governor's latest plan is enacted, 684 families would lose the home visitation services of the NFN programs in their communities. An additional 358 families would lose their services, as the remaining sites in the state would face budget cuts of 30%. Once again, the poor are relegated to the bottom of the ladder, and quite possibly will lose hope of ever being able to advance to the next step.

Although I am no longer working for an NFN program, I am working directly with the sites across the state, delivering Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to first time moms who are diagnosed with Major Depression. Because depression in mothers has been shown to cause significant delays and problems for children, the CTF used this knowledge to launch this mental health intervention for the purpose of enabling these mothers to get the help they need so that dollars will be saved in mental health treatment and other concrete needs of the families later on. The CTF began this initiative in June of 2009 with the UCONN Health Center and the University of Hartford as a clinical trial to see if this therapy model will effectively treat moms in their own homes, removing the barriers to treatment. Ours is only one of two programs like it in the country and we look forward to the benefits our families in CT will receive. We also look forward to sharing the model with other states in their efforts to providing much needed treatment to those who are unable to secure it elsewhere.

The wisdom of the CTF is simple: to PREVENT the spending of dollars in the future by providing the invaluable services vulnerable families so desperately need NOW. Please vote NO to the Governor's plan, sending the message to these families that they DO matter, and that these discriminatory proposals at **their** expense, will NOT be tolerated. Thank you.