

My name is Kathleen Sauer. I am a member of the Board of Directors of Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Inc., also known as Pathways/Senderos. I am speaking today to appeal to you to protect the State funding previously approved for teen pregnancy prevention.

I live in New Britain and every spring for as long as I can remember, I have observed a disheartening phenomenon when I drive in the Arch St. neighborhood where the Pathways/Senderos Center is located. Just as flowers emerge when the weather warms, so do the new, teen mothers, pushing their babies' strollers along the sidewalks, sometimes accompanied by the young fathers. So many of these girls and boys—

And I use these terms deliberately and advisedly—should be in school at the times I see them. It saddens me to know that they will never realize their full potentials, will fail to meet their children's needs, and will perpetuate the cycle of poverty because they became parents before they were ready for the task.

Because I volunteer each week at Pathways, I have been able to witness a very different scenario. In the positive, nurturing environment of the Center, our students come to realize that, through hard work and commitment, it is possible to escape poverty. HOPE IS A POWERFUL "CONTRACEPTIVE." Staff members motivate our young people to avoid pregnancy by providing them with real evidence that good things can happen in their lives. Some of the students who were served by Pathways in the "early days" have now graduated from college. They come back to the Center and are role models for the younger kids. It is very gratifying to see the children begin to believe that they, too, can achieve successful futures through delaying parenthood and embracing education.

There is no doubt that Pathways is successful in its mission. Our efficacy has been repeatedly demonstrated by outside evaluation. In a time when it is more important than ever that public funds be allocated to only the most credible stewards of those funds, you can be assured that we meet the new criteria for results-based accountability.

Pathways has been nationally recognized for its nearly unprecedented success. The program has an outstanding, small staff which is dedicated to the long-term success of our students. Pathways is a precious gem of which the State of Connecticut can be extremely proud. Keep it going.