



CABHN



Connecticut Alliance For Basic Human Needs

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Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
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Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ellen Small, and I am coordinator of CABHN, the Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs. **I am here today to testify on the Governor's March 1, 2010 Deficit Mitigation Plan.**

CABHN is a statewide network of individuals, service providers, grassroots organizers, and advocates dedicated to improving services to our state's low-income families, helping move them toward self-sufficiency to meet their most basic needs.

For many of the hardworking, dedicated parents I meet through my work, their lives were a struggle long before the current recession hit. For many parents, jobs were scarce well before unemployment exceeded 8%. Housing was hard to secure and hard to maintain. Childcare was expensive and unavailable. And employers did not provide healthcare for these parents and their children. For such families, not much has improved. **Not only do these families find themselves still in need of safety net services, but now thousands more have joined them in line.**

Because we see a significant increase in families accessing SNAP benefits and Unemployment Insurance, as well as increases in Temporary Family Assistance and Medicaid/HUSKY utilization, **I believe it is unwise to close the deficit with the deepest cuts hitting the Department of Social Services, disproportionately impacting low-income families, medical providers, and community-based non-profit providers** – the very people who are most adversely affected by our state's economic challenges and budget woes.

Some of the proposed cuts that are of greatest concern to CABHN include:

- Expanding the Preferred Drug List to include ALL mental health drugs
- Implementing cost-sharing requirements on Medicaid services
- Implementing HUSKY B premiums under Band 1 and increasing under Band 2
- Reductions to Medicaid provider rates
- Restriction of vision services for adults under Medicaid

- Suspending funding for HUSKY Outreach – which is the HUSKY Infoline
- Suspend balance of funds in DSS non-entitlement Grant Accounts, including Nutrition Assistance, Housing/Homeless services, Employment Services, and the Human Services Infrastructure, to name a few
- Suspension of funding for Transportation for Employment Independence
- Suspension of limited Vision/Non-Emergency Medical Transportation benefits under SAGA
- Suspension of non-emergency Dental Services for Adults under Medicaid and SAGA
- Elimination of funding for neighborhood youth centers
- Reduced funding for School-based Health Clinics

Although I understand that some cuts will have to be made to fill the budget deficit, I do not believe such significant reductions must be made to the Department of Social Services budget, essentially balancing the budget on the backs of our state's most vulnerable residents.

Instead, I encourage the Legislature to adopt a balanced approach to filling this hole by taking steps to increase revenue.

As the needs of Connecticut's residents continue to grow, the revenues necessary to meet those needs have declined. These growing needs will not just go away if we continue to cut the very services designed to meet those needs. Instead, these needs must be met through preservation of the safety net and continued financial support to community providers. **These needs must be met through increased revenue.**

CABHN supports and suggests the following revenue options:

- Increase income taxes for those who can best afford it
- Delay reductions in the gift and estate tax
- Increase the state sales tax or modernize it to cover services
- Raise taxes on unhealthy products, including soda

We support revenue solutions because relying on cuts alone will only harm our economy and further jeopardize our state's most vulnerable families. Connecticut must not look only to one-time solutions, but rather to sustainable solutions that will not only fill our current deficit, but also improve Connecticut's future economic prosperity.

On behalf of the thousands of CABHN members statewide whose families, clients, and programs will be devastated by the Governor's proposed Deficit Mitigation Plan, I urge you to act to protect our state's safety net by adopting a balanced approach to filling the deficit.

Thank you for your time and attention to these issues that are critical to so many Connecticut families.