



**Board of Directors**

Frances Newby  
*Chairwoman*  
Rev. Donald C. Luster  
*Vice Chair and Secretary*  
Peter H. Roberge  
*Treasurer*  
Edith B. Cassidy  
*Immediate Past Chair*

Stanley Bernard  
Rev. Brian Bodt  
Marta Calderón  
Gina Dunston-Boone, M.D.  
Mary E. Eady  
Robert Francis  
Linda Goldenberg  
Marcy Hardt  
Frances Haynes  
Margaret Hiller  
Alejandra Holway  
Hernan Illingworth  
Pastor Tyrone P. Jones, IV  
Karen King  
Brian J. Langdon  
Cynthia Moore  
Nadine Nevins  
Jane F. Norgren  
Janice Park  
Margie Powell  
Alonda T. Powell-Johnson  
Zoraida Reyes  
Gina LeVon Simpson  
Tanya Rhodes Smith  
Ludwig Spinelli  
Allyson Stollenwerck  
Helen B. Wasserman  
Scott K. Wilderman  
Katherine S. Yacavone

Mary Pat Healy  
*Executive Director*  
Barbara Edinberg  
*Assistant Director*

TESTIMONY OF THE

BRIDGEPORT CHILD ADVOCACY COALITION

ON THE

DEFICIT MITIGATION PLAN

SUBMITTED TO THE

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

MARCH 11, 2010

Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition Testimony to  
Appropriations Committee

The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony to the Appropriations Committee of the 2010 General Assembly regarding the Deficit Mitigation Plan.

Families throughout the state are struggling every day to put food on the table and keep their children healthy. Many parents have lost jobs – the unemployment rate in Bridgeport is 14.7%, a jump from 12.7% in December, and that does not include those who have stopped looking for work because they are discouraged or who are only working part-time because they could not find fulltime employment. Many are in debt, not able to pay their bills, forgoing medical and dental care for themselves because they cannot afford the cost of a visit to the doctor or dentist. Others are applying for state assistance for the first time in their lives.

We appreciate that the state is struggling, as well, with a deficit of \$518 million. However, as the recession continues, it is imperative that the state budget provide relief to those who are hardest hit by the severe economic downturn. We urge you not to balance the budget on the backs of struggling families. We urge you to protect children and invest in their future. Adopt measures that will increase the state budget revenues so that health, early care, education, housing and human services critically needed by low-income children and their families can be saved.

### **Health Care**

We oppose budget cuts or policy changes that will limit access to HUSKY and Medicaid. Without health and dental coverage, parents and children will forgo needed medical care and medicine until there is a crisis. The state will end up paying for the cost of care, but at a much higher price.

Specifically, we support:

*Current premiums and co-payment structure for HUSKY B:* When premiums were raised in 2004 and 2005, thousands of children would have lost coverage because their parents could not afford the increase. The legislature repealed the increase. Similarly, co-pays discourage the use of needed health care.

*Dental care, vision services and no co-payments for adults on Medicaid:* Good dental and vision care is integral to good health. Untreated dental conditions can lead to diabetes, heart disease and blood infections. Without coverage, many adults will forgo preventive dental care and end up needing more costly emergency care. Even nominal co-payments for health care create a hardship for low-income parents and limit access to needed care.

*HUSKY outreach and HUSKY Infoline:* Community-based outreach and one-on-one telephone assistance through HUSKY Infoline is essential to ensure that eligible families enroll – and stay enrolled – in HUSKY and get the health care they need. In FY 2009, HUSKY Infoline helped 525 children get re-enrolled in HUSKY after losing coverage. If these children had not enrolled in HUSKY and needed medical care, the cost of non-urgent emergency room care would have been as high as \$1.1 million.

Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition Testimony to  
Appropriations Committee

Independent performance monitoring: Independent performance assessments are critical to ensure that changes in HUSKY policies and health plans are closely monitored.

Funding for community-based health centers and school-based health centers: These programs provide accessible, affordable health care to low-income families and their children.

### **Early Care and Education**

Research clearly demonstrates that quality child care is critically important to provide children with the strong start they need. Early education programs provide a stable environment for children during times of family crisis and economic uncertainty. The lack of safe, affordable and reliable child care is one of the most significant barriers preventing parents from getting and keeping a job. We urge you to continue to invest in education and early care so parents can get and keep their jobs and children can get the early foundation they need to succeed in school.

### **Housing**

The Governor's budget mitigation plan would suspend the balance of funds – \$6.2 million – in the Department of Social Services non-entitlement grant programs, including housing/homeless services during this fiscal year. Without these services, low-income families are at high risk of homelessness.

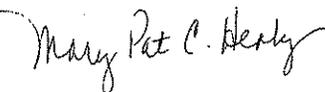
### **Support Measures to Increase Revenue**

These are difficult economic times but the state has options. Rather than cutting services for struggling families and children, we urge you to adopt a balanced approach to the budget. We urge you to support measures that address the state budget deficit with real solutions. We urge you to:

- *Create a tax structure that is more progressive and fair. Increase income tax rates for those most able to pay.*
- *Delay the reductions in the gift and estate tax.*
- *Evaluate tax breaks to see whether Connecticut is actually getting an economic return on its investment.*

Connecticut has a choice. It can provide critical support to our children and families most in need or continue to increase the divide between the rich and the poor.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony.



Mary Pat C. Healy, Executive Director  
Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition  
2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06605  
(203) 549-0075  
[mphealy@bcacct.org](mailto:mphealy@bcacct.org)

.....