

**Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Legislative Agencies Subcommittee
Regarding funding for the Connecticut Commission on Children**

**By Jill Spinetti, President and CEO
The Governor's Partnership to Protect Connecticut's Workforce
DBA The Governor's Prevention Partnership
March 1, 2011**

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Representative Dillon, Senator Welch, Representative Miner, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jill Spinetti and I am the president and CEO of The Governor's Prevention Partnership. For over 20 years our non-profit organization has provided resources and services so that young people in our state can grow up free from substance abuse, underage drinking, violence, and bullying and be able to take their place in our future workforce.

Today, I'd like to ask for your continued support for the Connecticut Commission on Children, an organization that we have worked closely with over the last decade to reduce youth violence and prevent bullying. Our state's most vulnerable citizens, our young children, need to be safely in the hands of their care. Funding the Connecticut Commission on Children is an investment in our future and is critically needed now more than ever.

In 2002 the Commission on Children led a Bullying Task Force that resulted in a report titled "Brave Enough to Be Kind," which outlined policies and practices for solving the problem of bullying in our schools. Instrumental in leading the charge on prevention of bullying since then, our state now has legislation that provides guidelines for school districts and is currently being revised in this legislative session to include cyberbullying and other updates. Last November, the Commission galvanized attention on bullying and cyberbullying in Connecticut by holding a forum here at the LOB that was attended by more than 500 students, parents, educators and government officials with a keynote speech delivered by Kevin Jennings, assistant deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

Tireless in their approach, the staff of the Commission are also working with school districts to coordinate bullying prevention services; they are seeking funding for schools around the state that want to get involved in the Olweus bullying prevention model, a nationally recognized program that the Commission and their partners are bringing to the state; and, they are keeping attention focused on the issue through the media, speaking engagements, outreach and legislative involvement.

This is just one example of their far-reaching work that also includes coordinating early-care and education programs, parent engagement through their Parent leadership Training Institute (PLTI) which is now in 23 towns and cities, and addressing a broad range of issues that affect children including poverty, homelessness, obesity, child abuse and other important issues.

The Commission on Children is the conscience and voice of children in Connecticut government. They are efficient in their approach, with dedicated staff who operate in a lean and cost-effective manner. In addition, the Commission is responsible for obtaining millions in federal funding through the TANF Emergency Fund and \$32.9 million from the unemployed homeowners loan program.

As a statewide non-profit organization leader, I rely on the Commission on Children for their research and expertise, leadership and resources, knowing that gaps are being addressed and above all the well-being of our young people is assured. The staff of the Commission is recognized nationally for their expertise and Connecticut is ahead of the curve in some areas because of their vision.

I ask that you provide sufficient funding for the Connecticut Commission on Children to continue to serve as advocates and leaders for children. This investment in our future is critical.