

March 2, 2011

Re: Testimony opposing cuts to the Department of Children and Families Juvenile Parole Staff

To: Appropriations Committee

My name is Jacqueline Rivera and I am an active voter, parent, homeowner and long-standing resident of the State of Connecticut. I have been employed by the State of Connecticut, Department of Children and Families for 17 years within the Bureau of Juvenile Services, the past 5 years as a Juvenile Parole Supervisor. I would like to thank you for reading my testimonial and allowing me the opportunity to partake in this principle process of democracy. My testimonial is in opposition of DCF's budget proposal to reduce Juvenile Parole Staff with the elimination of 22 positions. The budget proposal is located in Governor Malloy's Budget Summary under the Department of Children and Families on page B-140 "Recommended Significant Changes."

The proposal to reduce 22 Parole Staff is fiscally irresponsible and short sighted. We are presently 14 months into the 1st phase of the Raise the Age Legislation and only 16 months away from the 2nd phase, which is the inclusion of 17 year olds into the Juvenile System. I am confused, disappointed and outraged by this proposal. It is clear that DCF has not given this proposal the attention and thought that it deserves.

The Division of Juvenile Parole Services is comprised of 49 total staff statewide, 9 Parole Supervisors and 40 Parole Officers/Social Workers. While other agencies, organizations and DCF's Connecticut Juvenile Training School prepare to hire and organize for the 2nd phase of Raise the Age, this proposal to reduce 22 Parole Staff is in direct contradiction and rational of preparedness. Over the past 2 years, our division has made great gains moving forward in preparation of our new population. Our division has recently undergone extensive training in a new Assessment and Case Plan tool. The bureau of Juvenile Services recently contracted with Wheeler Clinic and purchased statewide slots for MST/FIT and MDFT/RAFT. A great deal of work has been exhausted in re-aligning longer-term residential providers to short-term transitional programs, so extensive work can be achieved while our youth remain in their communities.

The proposal to eliminate 22 Parole Staff will undercut the progress that can be accomplished. Our community programs are not able to successfully work and help our youth alone. The communities, providers and families require the help and services that our division is trained and experienced to deliver. We are tasked with the responsibility of supervising and helping rehabilitate the most challenging and at risk youth in our state. Every night our news broadcasters deliver the tragic news of our young people dying due to senseless violence, or a mother's anguish cry after losing her child to the streets caused by death or incarceration. Juvenile Parole Services understands more than anyone the pressures and challenges that our young people face. We are able to balance our responsibility at maintaining public

safety, accountability and ensuring our youth's needs are met through proper treatment and rehabilitative services.

We believe in the principals of Balanced and Restorative Justice and Graduated Sanctions. We believe in building strong relationships with our youths, with their families, with their communities. We understand the importance of being responsive to our clients needs. The youths, families, schools, police, court, providers have all depended on our involvement. The reduction will only force our division to be crisis driven and thus revert us back to becoming reactive not proactive in our approach in treating the youth. We have been a piece of a very complex puzzle and reducing our staff to bear bones is a superficial attempt at reducing a fiscal crisis which will only prove to be more financially costly at the end and irresponsible to the children, families and communities of this state.

I thank you again for your time and ask that you please examine DCF's budget proposal, analyze it's lack of fiscal responsibility and its lack of commitment to promoting best practices in improving Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Rivera, DCF Juvenile Parole Supervisor/SWS

Jackierivera812@yahoo.com