

February 26, 2011,

Re: Testimony opposing cuts to DCF Parole Staff

To Appropriations Committee,

My name is David Aberle and I have been employed by DCF, as a Parole Social Worker for over 11 years. Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony regarding my opposition to the DCF budget proposal to Increase parole caseloads by the associated reduction of 22 Parole Social Workers. The Budget proposal is located in Governor Malloy's Budget Summary under the Department of Children and Families on page B-140 under Recommended Significant Changes. Parole Services Division is charged with the responsibility to provide supervision and oversight of treatment to all youth who have been committed as delinquent by the superior court of juvenile matters for the state of Connecticut.

The proposal was made by the previous DCF administration who is no longer employed. The proposal was created out of Governor Rell's call to reduce costs by 10% last year. The Parole Division was the only division targeted for the entire DCF cost reduction due to the fact that it does not fall under the Juan F. consent decree. The Division is made up of 49 staff total with 9 Parole social work supervisors and 40 Parole social workers. 3 Parole social work supervisors and 3 Parole social workers will retire by July 2011, leaving a total of 37 parole social workers and 6 parole social work supervisors. If the Budget is passed with 22 additional staff being eliminated there will be 15 parole social workers and 6 parole supervisors to cover the entire state of Connecticut. Projected retirements in 2012 are: 1 Parole social work supervisor and 6 Parole social workers, leaving 9 parole social workers and 5 parole supervisors for a total staff of 14. These retirements alone over the next 2 years (13) will equal savings without making any cuts.

This current proposal was first brought to our attention on or around 9/1/10 when we had a total number of 290 youth and 290 families. The current parole population as of 2/25/11 is 360 youth and 360 families. This is a 20% increase in four months and the caseloads are increasing daily due to the first installment of Raise the Age legislation (16 year olds). With the proposed cuts to parole staff July 1, 2011 the parole social worker to client ratio will be 36:1. The second phase of Raise the Age legislation (17 year olds) will go into effect July 2012, with an anticipated increase to the parole population of 60%-65%. If our current number (360) stayed the same and didn't grow, a 60% increase would be 576 youth and 576 families. This increase would make the caseload ratio of youth to Parole social workers in July 2012 64:1. Both of these numbers 36:1 and 64:1 would make completing mandated tasks impossible. These mandates currently include face to face contact with youth in placements twice monthly and face to face contact once per month with parents while their child is in placement. Once our youth are placed home our face to face contact is 1-3 times per week youth and biweekly face to face contact with a parent. Other mandates are monthly or weekly contact with service providers, depending if the service is community based or

residential. All contacts are documented in our conduit system and must be entered within 5 days of contact. Other duties include: assessing risk and needs using our new youth compass tool through motivational interviewing, developing treatments plans, completing status reports/updates as requested by the courts, providing transportation for families and clients, identify and refer youth and families to appropriate services, educational advocate for youth and families, assist in finding financial assistance and much more. The reduction of parole staff will greatly hinder a workers ability to complete such duties given the increase in numbers 36:1 and 64:1.

More important this current reduction plan would not be in the youth or families best interest as family engagement and case management would suffer. Services to youth and their families would be greatly impacted, as the division would be forced to be crisis driven. Youth and their families would not receive appropriate supervision, interventions or services. Providers and community programming would not receive proper support or oversight. All of this would ultimately lead to more youth being arrested, incarcerated or removed from the community. This is exactly what we are trying to prevent and why Raise the Age is such a good idea under the current staffing ratios. Youth being treated under parole services in the community is cheaper (\$33/day) than youth that are in congregate settings (\$300 to \$500/day). There will be no benefit to the youth and families of Connecticut and no cost savings. There will be increased costs realized due to the lack of supervision and support provided by Parole staff which will result in additional time spent in congregate care settings.

In my 11 years with DCF Parole Services I have seen our services improve and with that our youth are more successful. I now have more youth graduating from high school than I did 11 years ago and more of those youth are going onto college. This is a win, win for everyone and exactly why I supported and still support Raise the Age. Cutting parole staff will only negate the progress we have made and will no doubt hurt the youth and families we serve. Less support, supervision and parole staff will lead to increased costs immediately and down the road. Please do not support these proposed cuts to DCF parole staff, the kids and families can't afford it and neither can the State of CT.

Additionally, the Projected cost savings of 1.7 million with the reduction of 22 Parole staff who are direct care providers could be realized through the reduction of 14 managers within the same Bureau of Juvenile Services who have no direct care responsibilities, unidentified functions, and no verifiable accountability.

Thank you again for taking the time to read and listen to my testimony against the DCF proposed cuts to 22 parole staff.

Sincerely,

David Aberle