

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to serve as testimony in absolute opposition to the budget cuts regarding DCF Juvenile Parole Services and the reduction of Juvenile Parole Officers within the Department of Children and Families. I have worked as an independent mental health provider for DCF Parole Services over the past 6 years. It is my strong opinion that cutting Parole Officers not only creates child welfare concerns but public safety concerns as well.

Having worked with both Juvenile Parole Officers as well as Child Protective Services workers in cases where children were dually committed, I can say without a doubt, in almost all cases, the Parole Officers and their supervisors were the parties responsible for managing the child both in the community as well within residential care. In addition, Parole Officers are direct contact workers whom, in this writer's mind, are directly responsible for the care and welfare of these children and young adults while in the community. Without these parole officers, client welfare and care will surely suffer. This is neither a good choice for the children we are charged with helping, or the communities from which they come.

It is my opinion that these cuts can very easily come from other places within the department, such as cuts within upper management and through cutting unsuccessful programming, instead of renewing current provider contracts without serious consideration.

In addition, it is well known that the statistics are now showing a reduction in direct placements and subsequently juvenile parole cases. These are false statistics. Juvenile probation is, and has been keeping adolescent offenders in the community longer which is having a direct impact on post-adjudicated caseloads. History shows this can occur only so long before the numbers spike and direct placements skyrocket which subsequently leads to more children being placed in the communities on parole status after residential treatment. Furthermore, in 2012 "Raise the Age" will be fully adopted within the state, leading to even more young adults, many of them violent and Serious Juvenile Offenders, being managed by DCF Parole Services in the coming years.

The majority of the young adults committed delinquent between the ages of 16 to 18 have already been through residential treatment at least once if not several times in their lifetimes. Community management of this population is nothing to be taken lightly. Without proper community management, the likelihood of recidivism increases drastically and would end up costing the taxpayer money once the client is incarcerated whether it be in the juvenile or adult system.

It is up to our state government and legislature to use foresight and make the appropriate decision to keep our Juvenile Parole Officers working rather than hindsight allowing layoffs resulting in additional burden on our communities and taxpayers by and large.

Sincerely,

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