

I would like to thank the appropriations committee for the opportunity to submit this testimonial.

My name is Rafael Melendez, I have been a state employee for 14 years. I am currently employed as a DCF Parole Services Worker. I am opposed to the cuts being suggested in this current budget proposal. 22 Juvenile Parole staff are being suggested for elimination.

While I am sensitive to our state's fiscal condition, I am concerned that this would be detrimental in many levels. Please consider these facts:

1. Raise the Age legislation: The 16 year old population is beginning to realize an increase in our caseload size. The incoming 17 year old population will surely add to this and services will be needed to adjust. Job training, daily supervision, and holding youths accountable is what keeps them out of the correctional system when they become adults. This dynamic of providing current public service while preventing future societal ills requires a well trained and sufficiently staffed Parole unit.

2. Community safety: Whether it's gang activities, drug involvement or assaultive behaviors, the criminal nature of the population we supervise is real & alarming. At risk is the security of the citizens throughout our communities.

3. Retirements: In all, 13 staff will have retired by the end of 2012. Additional Cuts to our staff would be dangerous in light of the number of youth in need of supervision at that time. Allowing the natural course of parole staff retirements is prudent and avoids future rush to re-hire due to increasing case loads.

4. Efficiency: The reality is that Parole staff will have the option of shifting throughout other state agencies and displacing other state employees if the cuts occur. The other employees will have similar options and additional training will be needed to accommodate these changes. This is expensive not to mention time consuming. The shifting of job skills and additional spending defeats the intent of the proposal in many ways.

Self preservation is natural and while we care about our livelihoods, other real issues are at stake, including the families impacted, the young men and women who benefit and the communities that are protected. DCF Juvenile Parole does important work in Connecticut communities with an already relatively small staff, this proposal to cut our specialized division is not the answer.

Respectfully submitted,

Rafael Melendez