

March 1, 2011

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

To: Appropriations Committee

My name is Jaime Rosa, I have been employed by the State of Connecticut, Department of Children and Families for 9+ years, the past 2.5 years as a Juvenile Parole Officer/Social Worker. 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".

D.C.F. Parole Services currently has 49 Juvenile Parole Officers/Parole Supervisors. I am extremely concerned that substantial job cuts would not only decimate my department but would also have an adverse affect on the youth and families that we serve and the overall public safety in the State of Connecticut. D.C.F. Parole Services provides supervision/services to committed juvenile offenders and covers the entire State of Connecticut. The population of young adults that we supervise is also aging and increasing due to the Raise the Age law that went into effect last year. 16 year-old offenders are now considered juveniles. Over the last year D.C.F. Parole Services has seen a steady increase in overall numbers of committed juvenile offenders. The number of committed juvenile offenders will continue to increase. In July, 2012 the 2nd portion of Raise the Age will go into effect. 17 year-old offenders will be considered juveniles and this will only add to the overall numbers of committed juvenile offenders in the State of Connecticut. What all of this means is the number of committed juvenile offenders will continue to increase substantially over the next 2 years. While CSSD (Juvenile Probation) is planning to hire more staff and built a new Juvenile Detention Center in Bridgeport to prepare for Raise the Age, DCF is doing the opposite with the Parole Services Unit. There are also plans in place to build an additional school and renovate several buildings at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School to increase capacity in preparation for Raise the Age.

DCF's current practice is to stop servicing youth when they turn 18 regardless of their Commitment end date. It appears that the age of jurisdiction for parole services will increase to 20, which will also increase the number of youth that Parole will service.

Juvenile Parole Officers on average carry caseloads equivalent to Child Protection Social Workers, but the DCF Parole Unit was the only unit targeted for cuts. If these cuts are made, caseload would increase to numbers that would be unmanageable and turn Parole Officers into crisis managers, responding to emergencies and putting out fires. DCF Parole Unit does not fall under the Juan F. Consent Decree, which is clearly the reason the Parole Unit was targeted. DCF has stated that it is a priority to get out of the Juan F Consent Decree.

Based on seniority (range 5-15 years) the 22 Parole Officers (P-2 staff members) that would be cut have bumping rights over 22 Child Protection Social Workers. These 22 staff members would have to be trained on Child Protection policies and procedures, costing the state more money. The DCF Training Academy has a 6 to 9 month curriculum. 22 Child Protection Social Worker would loose their jobs.

My Division has been fiscally responsible by not filling positions lost to attrition and retirement for nearly two years. We are highly concerned that DCF has presented a shortsighted budget, mainly their decision to cut our division nearly in half without presenting more effective cost savings proposals in other areas. My division was active in compiling and presenting cost saving measures that were not included in the DCF budget proposal. The most significant of which, examined non-caseload carrying managers. Since 2001, I have witnessed D.C.F. become top heavy with middle managers and I am at a loss regarding their actual job responsibilities. It has become increasingly frustrating to watch individuals who have no clear-cut responsibilities and have a zero impact on the D.C.F. Juvenile Justice System collect large salaries and be immune to state layoffs.

Once again, thank you for your time. I ask that you please examine D.C.F.'s budget proposal, analyze its lack of fiscal responsibility and its lack of commitment to promoting best practice principles in improving Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System. I welcome the opportunity to speak with you further regarding my concerns and the proposed budget.

Sincerely,

Jaime Rosa, D.C.F. Juvenile Parole Officer/Social Worker