



Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc.

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**Testimony in support of the Nurturing Families Network and Teen Pregnancy
Prevention**

CT Department of Social Services

Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Cheryl Burack and I am the Executive Director of Coordinating Council for Children In Crisis, Inc. in New Haven. I am here to urge you to oppose Governor Malloy's proposed budget cuts to the CT Department of Social Services teen pregnancy prevention and Nurturing Families Network Programs.

I would like to share 3 important facts about both programs:

1. Both are evidence-based with proven results
2. Both provide one-of-a-kind services to some of the most vulnerable populations in our state
3. These services save Connecticut money by preventing more serious and costly future problems

Our surveys in New Haven show that of the middle school students who are sexually active, their first sexual experience took place at age 11. This helps us understand that early intervention is critical in preventing teen pregnancy. This is especially important in

New Haven, where the pattern of adolescent pregnancy is almost double what it is in the rest of the state.

The Teen Outreach Program is unique in its emphasis on service learning, helping students become the help givers rather than the help receivers and giving them a sense that they can contribute to their community and have a future here. The Teen Outreach Program has been evaluated nationally and shown that participants in the program have a 60% lower rate of school dropout, 14% lower rate of school suspension, 11% lower rate of school course failure and 33% lower rate of teen pregnancy.

The Nurturing Families Network serves an equally vulnerable population, providing intensive home visiting to first-time parents at-risk of child abuse or neglect.

- The NFN has demonstrated a rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect in participating high-risk families of only 2% compared to 20% for similar families not participating in this type of program.
- The immunization rate for two-year olds in NFN is 93% compared to 66% for two year olds with a similar demographic background on Medicaid.
- A significant percentage of parents in NFN complete high school, become employed and become more economically self-sufficient.

It is important for you to know that this bill proposing a funding cut gives the impression that services will be relatively unaffected since the hospital programs will remain in place. This is false. The truth is that there are 700 families/year that the community-based programs serve and who will now have no place to go. Seventy-five employees will lose their jobs and another 25 would be destabilized.

Last year, Jessica, a mother in our program, shared with you her childhood memories of group homes and residential institutions, her suicide attempts and psychiatric challenges. She asked you to support funding for nurturing families. "If I didn't have their support" she testified, "I will probably have the authorities in my life and my daughter would not be with me today."

For all the Jessica's who find a lifeline in their Home Visitor, please support funding for the Nurturing Families Network.

Thank you for your past support of these programs, and I hope you will keep up the fight.

Thank you.

Cheryl Burack, M.S.

Executive Director

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