New Haven Family Alliance

Partnership for Family Empowerment
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Director of Operations: Ms. Barbara Tinney

TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

March 4, 2011

Mr. Timothy Brown, Coordinator
New Haven Family Alliance/Male Involvement Network
370 James Street
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Dear members of the Appropriations Committee:
I am the Project Coordinator for the New Haven Family Alliance (NHFA), Male Involvement Network, a fatherhood program. The NHFA is a medium sized non-profit organization that serves over 1000 children and families each year from the greater New Haven area. Over 90% of the agency's clients represent New Haven's most vulnerable children and families. The Male Involvement Network, a program of the NHFA, is a collaboration of fatherhood stakeholders operating in New Haven for fourteen years. We worked closely with the late Representative John Martinez in his foundational work on fatherhood in Connecticut and we helped shape the 1999 Fatherhood legislation in our State. We are here today on behalf of the thousands of fathers, mothers and children, in Connecticut, who have been transformed by the work of the Male Involvement Network, and our fellow certified fatherhood sites who have operated the Fatherhood Initiative Programs and the Promoting Responsible Fathers initiative. These programs administered by the Department of Social Services. I am urging you to reject the

Department of Social Services recommendation to eliminate funding for the Father Initiative Program.

Connecticut was one of the first States in the country to implement fatherhood legislation and to convene a Fatherhood Council. Our efforts to address the issues of fatherhood, father absence and father involvement by promoting responsible fatherhood have produced impressive results for father, mothers and, most importantly, children. Relevant data provides evidence that the problems associated with father absence are monumental and that responsible fathers are important to children's economic, social, educational, moral, and spiritual well-being.

We know that the absence of fathers in families that are poor create substantial negative consequences that need to be addressed in order to engender a healthy productive society. What is it that we know? We know that children in father-absent homes are five times more likely to be poor and 54% more likely to be poorer than his or her father. We know that father absence increases the risk of teen pregnancy; increases the odds that a juvenile will be incarcerated and that youth will leave school before completing the 12th grade. We know that fathers in our programs achieve increased employment, better ability and motivation to pay child support, closer involvement with their children and better outcomes for their children. Investment in responsible fatherhood that promotes better outcomes for children benefits all the people of the State of Connecticut. Investing in fathers and families is prudent; it reduces future costs.

We all understand that the state budget situation is dire, and that all money allocated needs to be used in ways that are extremely effective and efficient. We can think of no expenditure that better meets the core mission of the Department of Social Services, and of government itself, than one so strongly proven to strengthen families, improve children's outcomes and prevent future costs. Fatherhood services supported by DSS funding have been proven again and again to work – and to save the state many times the amount of their cost in later entitlement and safety net expenses. There can be no question about the impact and effectiveness of these funds. Our programs meet rigorous

independent program standards and have proven their ability to use best practices to bring fathers into positive and functioning relationships with their families and children. The certified fatherhood sites partner with all relevant support enforcement entities - IV-D, the family magistrate system and the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement. throughout the state to improve collection rates – In New Haven we have piloted a successful problem solving court and celebrated the completion of our first year on March 3, 2011.

Until now, the State has acted wisely and has successfully supported programs that are stopping the cycle of fatherlessness and child poverty at a very small cost to the State. These services are critically needed to prevent thousands of children from sliding further into poverty. The involvement of a father is in many cases a pivotal factor in a child's success in school and life. I believe that we can solve our budget crisis without dismantling programs that are effective and cost efficient.

We respectfully request that you restore the funding to the Department of Social Services budget that supports the Fatherhood Initiative Program.

Thank you for taking the time listen and to do this difficult work on behalf of the fathers, families and children of Connecticut

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