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Honorable committee members: Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony regarding the Governor's proposal to eliminate the Nurturing Families Network program non-hospital sites. My name is Kathleen Hagearty. I am the Clinical Supervisor for the Nurturing Families Network program at the Maternal and Child Services, City of New Haven Health Department. **I am here to ask for your support in maintaining the current level of funding for this valuable prevention program.**

The statistics and research by my colleagues and the University of Hartford researchers give a clear picture of who we serve, how the program promotes positive parenting, and the result such as dramatically lower rates of substantiated DCF cases. Reducing the work of Nurturing Families in Hartford and New Haven will change the reach of this evidence based, effective program, disproportionately affect poor and working class communities of color, and have unintended negative consequences in years to come.

I appreciate this is a challenging time for our state and federal government. That is why I believe it is not the right time to cut prevention programs. The Federal government has clearly expressed support for home visiting models. **In fact, if we maintain our current home visiting effort at the current funded level we stand to receive \$12 million dollars.** As a New Haven public school parent, I hear about "school reform" all the time. **Early education advocates have documented the case that early intervention makes a real difference in addressing the "achievement gap" so many of us are concerned about in CT.**

For the past couple of weeks I have thought of all the parents who have secured employment, maintained employment, gone back to school, and graduated since I started this job three years ago. Mostly, I thought of their stories and the dedicated staff who serve them. We are fortunate to have trained and compassionate staff who respect the people they work with every day and work to create meaningful and beneficial relationships.

When I meet pregnant and parenting mothers and fathers I ask what is it you want, what do you think you need? We listen and then the staff prepares and goes to work. When hearing about the potential loss of our site a home visitor's first question to me was "can Yale or St. Raph's take my clients?" This single mom, living in New Haven, and completing graduate school comes to work every day as dedicated as ever. She shares a picture of a year old playing with pots, making music. We see such progress in this family she works with every week: mom has moved a bit from her belief that children should not be noisy; they should not touch things in any room but the bedroom. She considers different kinds of discipline and shares joy in her child's accomplishment.

Our fathering home visitor reaches out to the grandfather on his block in the Hill. "Can you help my grandson?", his client in high school ask for diapers and help getting employment, and another calls to share the news that he got into college. I interview a young woman who says, "I want to do what my mother did for me and more. I want my baby to learn a lot and to succeed." She goes on to talk about her learning disability, how she writes everything down to do the right thing. Another home visitor who also lives in New Haven manages to work on school readiness and early literacy while also

addressing a mom's struggle to keep a job, and co-parent. This same woman last year brought her child and told members about her history of trauma, homelessness, and unemployment.

James Heckman, a Nobel Prize winning economist has a simple equation: **Invest, develop, sustain, and gain.** He advocates we should "invest in educational and development resources for disadvantaged families to provide equal access to successful early human development, nurture early development of cognitive and social skills in children from birth to age five, sustain early development with effective education through to adulthood and thereby gain a more capable, productive and valuable workforce that pays dividends to America for generations to come... Early investments produce children who learn better, develop critical life skills, have fewer problems in childhood and adolescence, commit fewer crimes, earn more money, and just generally live happier, stabler, more productive lives"

I believe maintaining funding for our Hartford and New Haven sites is fiscally responsible, is consistent with a jobs creating budget, will make a difference in closing that "achievement gap" and will make CT stronger and better in the years to come.

Thanks you for your time and attention. *For more information on the Nurturing Families Network program and our site feel welcome to contact me:*

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