



**CONNECTICUT
ASSOCIATION
of NONPROFITS**

*...to serve, strengthen
and support Connecticut's
nonprofit community.*

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
2.17.12**

**Regarding:
HB 5014, AA Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the
Fiscal Year Ending June 20, 2013
Human Services-DCF**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Prague, Representative Abercrombie, Representative Villano and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dave Tompkins and I currently serve children and families in Connecticut through various roles. Within my role as the Vice-President of Education, Child Placement and Group Care at Klingberg Family Centers, located in New Britain, I oversee a continuum of services for children and families who have experienced significant trauma in their lives. Additionally, I serve as a Co-Chair of the Children's Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (CBHAC) and Chair of the Children's Council for the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits).

Today, I am representing the views of the Children's Council of CT Nonprofits regarding the proposed appropriations for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) during fiscal year 2012 – 2013. CT Nonprofits is the largest membership organization in Connecticut dedicated exclusively to working with nonprofits in Connecticut. Together, the Council represents over 100 nonprofit provider agencies serving thousands of children and families in Connecticut. As we reviewed the budget documents several questions and concerns were raised which are outlined below. We respectfully request that you pose these questions to DCF and consider our concerns as you complete your review process.

We thank the Governor for his proposal of a 1% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for nonprofits, but ask that the Committee consider making the COLA effective July 1st instead of January 1st so that nonprofits can benefit from the full 1% in FY13. There has been no COLA for nonprofits since July of 2008. The cost of providing services to children and families has increased at double digit rates annually; we need every penny that the department can provide, and more, to continue to provide quality services. We strive to maintain a very high quality of service and any increase the Governor and Appropriations Committee can provide is appreciated.

We support the utilization of unique expenditure services (USE) funds to allow for parents to have the formal and informal services they need to be wrapped around them in support of the work they are doing. These funds need to be parent driven and available when they need them.

We also want to state that we are in full support of Commissioner Katz's vision of serving youth within their families and communities whenever possible. Commissioner Katz has communicated her vision effectively and has been transparent in its implementation. Our major concern relates to the pace that an initiative of this magnitude needs to take to include all stakeholders and to utilize data and planning, compared to the pace at which budget decisions are being made and implemented. It feels at times like we are flying blind.

The financial goal of the Department's initiative relies on movement of funding from more expensive congregate care services ("the back end") to less expensive family and community based services ("the front end"). While the planning for this movement has just begun, and will take many months if not years, the funding from the back end is being eliminated before the services needed on the front end are identified and funded. We are already seeing early indications of the impact this will have on the children and families of Connecticut. Within our Therapeutic Foster Care system, there are not enough families available and supported at the level they require to care for the youth needing homes. During the last quarter 25% of the placements were of an emergency nature and there are over 40 children for whom no match can be found in all of Connecticut. Children are sitting in Emergency Rooms

and shelters for days waiting for a hospital bed to become available and are then returned to the agency because one could not be found.

The system is beginning to back up already and we are just at the beginning of the planning process, not the end. There are not sufficient front end services available to the children moving into the community now and there is no immediate plan for the provision of these services. Unfortunately this will result in failed placements for kids and the loss of foster families.

We would like more information shared about the decisions behind the reductions proposed. In particular;

- What data was used to determine a reduction in Safe Home capacity from 142 beds to 84 beds?
- Two Level 2 Therapeutic Group Home beds will be closed based on utilization. Which of the cohorts has been underutilized and what is the reason for this underutilization? Our experience has been that this level of care has been extremely effective and produced excellent outcomes.
- What is the reasoning behind a reduction in No Nexus Special Education funding? Is the result of this a cost shift from state funding to local Board of Education funding? If so, are the local Boards of Education aware of this cost shift?
- With the stated increased need for additional foster and adoptive families, and an acknowledgement that they need additional training and supports, the proposed budget reduces the Board and Care Foster and Adoption accounts by \$5.7 million. This should be reviewed closely.

Thank you for your time and interest in these matters as well as your support in preserving the continuum of care for children in Connecticut. We hope that you can assist us with answers to our questions of DCF. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Dave Tompkins

Vice-President of Education, Child Placement, and Group Care

Klingberg Family Centers

(860) 832-5511

davidt@klingberg.org