

**Testimony of Laura Amenta**  
**Chair, The Children's Trust Fund Council**  
**CTFCouncil@aol.com      860-836-5800**

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Governor's MidTerm Budget Adjustments FY 2013  
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I appreciate the opportunity to speak at this hearing. I am Laura Amenta, Chair of the Children's Trust Fund Council. I am here to urge you to preserve funding for programs of the Children's Trust Fund, a division of the Department of Social Services.

The governor's budget proposes a 17% reduction in the \$15 million of state funds aimed at preventing abuse and neglect in families. This proposal will result in eliminating three critical programs – Family School Connection, Family Empowerment Programs and The Kinship Fund. It will also end funding to the Children's Law Center and cut the state's Healthy Start program by 10%.

I have to believe that if this legislature and the Governor really understood the value of these programs, they might reconsider. These programs are so important because they help the Governor achieve the state's goal of improving school readiness and closing the achievement gap.

I've provided detailed information about all the Trust Fund programs attached to my testimony but I want to highlight the programs that are proposed for elimination.

The first is

- **Family Empowerment Programs** – These are seven different initiatives that use nationally recognized child abuse prevention models to serve high risk parents including parents of children with disabilities, parents dealing with substance abuse, incarcerated fathers, and mothers who have experienced domestic violence. The programs are co-located in settings where families are addressing these issues. Measured outcomes include better parenting, improved knowledge of child development and an increase use of appropriate parenting techniques. **Family Empowerment programs increase the odds that children from extremely high risk families are nurtured appropriately and go to school ready to learn.**

The second is:

- **Family School Connection** – a comprehensive home visiting program for families whose children are frequently absent, truant, have academic or behavior problems. The program, offered at six elementary schools across the state, provide services to parents who are not adequately attending to their child’s educational needs. **These children are at the greatest risk of developmental, behavioral and health issues – issues that too often lead to school failure and resulting drop-out.** The state cannot afford to let these children drop out. Evaluations from the University of Hartford School of Social Research are compelling. Parents become more involved in their child’s education, in the school and their child’s lives. The 200 children in the program make promising gains in attendance and academics.

The third program targeted for elimination:

- **Kinship and Respite Fund** - provides small grants to orphaned and abandoned children who are living in the care of a financially struggling grandparent or relative who has been appointed guardian. It also provides grants for respite care, when a grandparent is serving as a child’s guardian. The fund is administered by the probate courts. Both Senator Harp and Senator Looney have been instrumental in developing and supporting this Fund. The Kinship Fund helps to keep children with their families and out of the costly foster care system. This fund is often the difference between a relative being able to take a child and placing the child in foster care. **The small grants are often used for children’s health care, tutoring, counseling, food or child care – items that have a direct impact on children’s ability to learn. Ill nourished, neglected, and unhealthy children are not optimal learners.**

We know that childhood success both in school and in life begins with parenting at its best.

**Our programs are interventions that enhance parenting and promote the positive growth and development of young children.**

Thanks to the past decade of research on early brain development, we know the importance of laying a strong foundation in early childhood and the importance of preventing early childhood trauma.

**Our programs lay that important early foundation and, not only prevent child abuse and neglect, but also help children with the skills and experiences that ultimately affect the likelihood of school success.**

**They also save the state money.** The cost per family is about \$4,000 for Family School Connection, \$790 for the Kinship Fund and \$300 for Family Empowerment initiatives compared to \$30,000 for a substantiated cost of abuse. Successful childhood interventions are a fraction of the cost of future treatments and mitigate future poor outcomes.

I urge you to find a way to save these key programs of the Trust Fund. These are investments we need to make. **Spending funds on human capital, especially children, is one of the most effective investments a government can make. REMEMBER AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WHY THE CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR STATE!!**



**Governor Malloy's FY 2012 Mid Term Budget Adjustment Proposal**

**Impact Analysis**

The governor's budget proposes a 17% reduction in the \$15 million of state funds aimed at preventing abuse and neglect in families. This proposal will result in eliminating three critical programs – Family School Connection, Family Empowerment Programs and The Kinship Fund. It will also end funding to the Children's Law Center and cut the state's Healthy Start program by 10%.

**FY 2012**

<b>Total General Fund Allocation</b>	<b>\$14,667,473</b>
<b>Special Funds for Kinship and Respite</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>

**Total State Allocation: Children's Trust Fund \$15,667,473**

**PROGRAMS PROPOSED FOR ELIMINATION OR REDUCTION**

**The Kinship and Respite Fund**

- This probate court-administered program awards small grants to aid children living with relatives who are court-appointed guardians. The grants provide for a range of activities including tutoring, camp, extra-curricular experiences and program fees, and respite for grandparents.

The Kinship and Respite Funds provided grants to 1266 children and 822 adults. State General Fund Allocation: \$1,050,000; Special Probate Court Fund Allocation: \$1,000,000. The number of families served is based on 2011 data – prior to the distribution of the special funds. It is anticipated that the number of children and grandparents will double as a result of the special funding.

Cost per child: \$355.00 Cost per relative caregiver: \$790.00

**Family School Connection**

- Provides intensive home visiting services to families whose children are frequently truant or tardy or otherwise at risk of school failure. These children are often not getting their needs met at home and are at greater risk for child abuse and neglect, developmental, behavioral and health issues. The program is offered in grades K-12 at five elementary schools.

Family School Connection provided intensive home visiting services to 200 families. State general Fund allocation: \$930,000

Cost per family: \$4,650

### **Family Empowerment Initiatives**

- Family Empowerment Initiatives include seven nationally recognized prevention programs that assist high-risk groups of parents and others involved in the lives of children.

Family Empowerment Initiatives provided home and group based services to roughly 700 parents. State general fund allocation: \$211,402

Cost per family: \$302

### **Legal Services on Behalf of Indigent Children**

- The program provides experienced lawyers for indigent children involved in high conflict custody and visitation cases. The lawyers give them a voice and represent them in family court. Through mediation and other services the Children's Law Center keeps these cases out of the court system saving CT millions of dollars. Additionally, their mediation services help create safe, stable environments for children whose parents are in chronic conflict. These services are unduplicated by any other agency or private organization in the state.

The program provided services to 240 adults and 375 children. State General Fund allocation: \$150,000

This is 25% of the funding spent on the program.

Cost per child \$153

### **Healthy Start**

- The programs ensures maternal and child health outcomes through Husky enrollment and by connecting pregnant and parenting new mothers to health care and other services. Services are provided in 15 locations across the state.

Approximately 5,000 mothers received services in 2009. State general allocation: \$1,600,000.

Cost per family: \$320

### **PROGRAMS THAT WOULD BE MAINTAINED UNDER PROPOSAL**

#### **The Nurturing Families Network – 3 components**

- Intensive home visiting for new parents who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect. The program focuses on nurturing parenting, child development, and health and community resources.
- Nurturing parenting groups that assist parents in developing appropriate expectations of their children and parenting skills.

- Nurturing Connections that brings new parents together with volunteers and others in the community who can help them adjust to the demands of having a baby.

Services are provided at 42 community locations throughout the state. The Nurturing Families Network served approximately 2,000 families in intensive home visiting and 600 families in Nurturing parenting groups. The program screened 7,200 and provided Connections services to 1,700. State General Fund allocation: \$10,389,446

### **Help Me Grow**

- Ensures that children and their families have access to a system of early identification, prevention and intervention services.
- Links child health providers, parents and service providers with existing community resources through a toll-free telephone number (1-800-505-7000).

Help Me Grow connected 2,800 children and families to community based services. It also provided the Ages and Stages Child Monitoring program to 3,000 families. State General Fund allocation: \$336,582

## Family Empowerment Programs

*Funded by the Children's Trust Fund*

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### What is a Family Empowerment Program?

The Family Empowerment initiatives include seven prevention programs that use nationally recognized models to assist extremely high-risk groups of parents involved in the lives of their children. These programs help families address the whole range of issues they face – including parenting and family relationships – by filling the gaps between the specific programs and services

### Program Specifics and Outcomes:

#### **ABCD Parenting, run by the Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport**

ABCD Parenting Program provides community-based workshops in Bridgeport to predominately Spanish-speaking parents of children with disabilities. The goal of the program is to increase the knowledge of parents in the areas of child development, age appropriate expectations, and good parenting practices.

#### **Fatherhood Initiative, run by Madonna Place in Norwich**

Fatherhood Initiative in Norwich provides support and educational services to young fathers to enhance parenting skills and increase parenting involvement. Referrals are made to child support enforcement and for paternity testing. Neighborhood forums, groups and case management services are offered. The program is a Certified Fatherhood site adhering to the National Fatherhood Initiative certification process to ensure quality standards of operation for fatherhood programs. Outcomes of the National Fatherhood Initiative include more involved, responsible, committed fathers and improved relationships with children.

#### **Focus on Fathers, run by the Wheeler Clinic in Somers at Osborn Correctional Prison**

**Focus on Fathers Program** provides parent education and support groups to incarcerated fathers at Osborne Correctional Facility. The program uses a 10-week curriculum that teaches fathers how to be effective nurturing fathers to their children. The goals of the program are to help break the cycle of violence from one generation to the next, and to help parents manage anger and stress while learning new parenting skills. The program is a

joint venture between Prevent Child Abuse CT, The Children's Trust Fund and the Department of Corrections.

#### **Friendship Circle, at the Rushford Center in Middletown**

Friendship Circle is an in-house program for parents in substance abuse treatment at Rushford Center in Meridan. Program goals are to provide strategies to: strengthen family functioning, increase family resiliency, improve self esteem, identify destructive/enabling behaviors, identify and express feelings constructively, learn and practice healthy coping skills, provide peer support, and improve anger management and parenting skills. This program has resulted in an increase in parents' knowledge of appropriate parenting techniques.

#### **MELD for Parents of Preschoolers, run by Family Services of Greater Waterbury**

MELD in Waterbury serves parents of preschoolers who live in severe poverty. This national model of parenting enhancement training is designed to assist parents with improving family/sibling relationships while preparing for school readiness. Various group activities are undertaken facilitated by a certified MELD Professional. Nationally, studies have found that MELD programs have resulted in a positive and significant shift in attitudes and beliefs about parenting and nurturing children. Outcomes included increased awareness of child's needs and better responses to those needs.

#### **M.O.M.S. Program, at the Hospital of Central Connecticut in New Britain**

M.O.M.S. (Mothers Offering Mothers Support) Program in New Britain offers ongoing groups for pregnant and young mothers age 21 and under. The group is designed to assist in strengthening the young women's self-image and to increase effective parenting. In 2011, the M.O.M.S. Program was honored by the CT General Assembly as a model program for young parenting teens.

#### **Mothershare, run by the Hartford Interval House**

Mothershare Program provides group support to mothers who have experienced domestic violence who reside in the Interval House Shelter or in the

surrounding Hartford community. The goal is to provide mutual support, promote non-violence, personal growth of the mothers, increase awareness

of the effects of domestic violence on their children, and to develop effective communication and parenting techniques.

# Interested in Closing the Achievement Gap?

## Support Family School Connection

### ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS AT HIGH RISK OF SCHOOL FAILURE

Family School Connection (FSC) provides home visiting services for families whose **children are frequently absent, truant, have academic or behavioral problems, or come to school unprepared.** In addition, the program provides services to parents who are not adequately engaged with their child's school or attending to their child's educational needs.

### WHO DOES IT SERVE?

FSC serves about 200 families with elementary school age children – largely between pre-K and third grade - every year. The families are mostly single head of households, have limited educations, high rates of unemployment and few resources. **More than one-third of the parents have less than a high school education.**

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Home visitors meet with the families on a regular basis – usually 2 to 3 times a month – for ten months or more. Home visitors help parents improve parenting skills, spend more time with their children, and make better connections with the school. The home visitors help the parents address the many issues that interfere with their ability to meet needs of their children. They help parents identify problems, develop plans and problem solving skills.

### PARTICIPATING PARENTS:

- SPEND MORE TIME HELPING THEIR CHILDREN WITH HOMEWORK AND LISTENING TO THEM READ.
- ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE INVOLVED WITH THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL AND EDUCATION.
- TAKE HOLD OF THEIR DEMANDS AS PARENTS AND MEET THE DEMANDS OF PARENTING.

### PARTICIPATING CHILDREN:

- MAKE PROMISING GAINS IN ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR OR ACADEMICS.

### LOCATED AT SIX ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS - PRE-K TO GRADE 12

- Betances in Hartford
- Bielefield School in Middletown
- Fair Haven School in New Haven
- Wequonnoc School in Norwich
- John M. Moriarty School in Norwich
- W.B. Sweeney School in Willimantic

**Don't let the Governor eliminate funds for these critical services**



### CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND COUNCIL

Family School Connection is a program of the Children's Trust Fund, a division of the Department of Social Services. The evaluation of the program was conducted by the University of Hartford Center for Social Research.

# Family Empowerment Programs

## Reduce Risk So Children Can Succeed

### DID YOU KNOW THAT SOME CHILDREN ARE AT GREATER RISK FOR SCHOOL FAILURE?

Children whose families experience domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, poverty, teen parenting or incarceration are at greater risk of school failure. These children are also at greater risk for child abuse and neglect as well as social, emotional and developmental problems.

### FAMILY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR THESE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Seven nationally recognized child abuse prevention programs are serving high risk parents in Connecticut including parents of children with disabilities, parents dealing with substance abuse, incarcerated fathers, teen mothers and mothers who have experienced domestic violence.

The Family Empowerment Programs, co-located in settings where the parents are addressing these issues, emphasize parenting and family relationships. The programs help parents focus on their role and responsibility as parents while they deal with other problems and concerns.

### A UNIQUE WAY TO INCREASE THE ODDS THAT HIGH RISK CHILDREN WILL BE READY TO LEARN

Many programs address specific issues, such as domestic violence or substance abuse. However, few programs address parenting and family relationships at the same time. When these additional matters are not addressed, children remain vulnerable and at risk.

### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- BETTER PARENTING
- IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
- INCREASED USE OF APPROPRIATE PARENTING SKILLS

### THE FAMILY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS:

- ABCD Parenting run by The Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport
- Fatherhood Initiative, run by Madonna Place in Norwich
- Focus on Fathers, run by Wheeler Clinic at Osborn Correctional Prison in Somers
- Friendship Circle, run by Rushford Center in Middletown
- MELD Parents of Preschoolers run by Family Services of Greater Waterbury
- M.O.M.S. Program run by the Hospital of Central Connecticut in New Britain
- Mothershare run by the Hartford Interval House

**Don't let these critical programs be eliminated from our State**



### CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND COUNCIL

Family Empowerment Programs are a child abuse prevention initiative of the Children's Trust Fund, a division of the Department of Social Services.

# Kinship and Respite Fund

## Keeping Children out of the Foster Care System

### HELPING ORPHANED AND ABANDONED CHILDREN

The Kinship Fund provides small grants to orphaned and abandoned children who are living in the care of a financially struggling grandparent or relative who has been appointed guardian. The grants help to normalize life for children whose lives have been in upheaval.

The Kinship Fund helps to keep children with their families rather than placing children in foster care. However because these children are not in foster care, their relatives do not receive the subsidies that foster care parents receive.

As hard as it may be to believe, the Kinship Fund makes the difference between a relative being able to take a child into their home and placing the child in foster care.

### HELPING GRANDPARENTS WHO THOUGHT THEIR CHILD REARING DAYS WERE BEHIND

The Grandparent Respite Fund provides small grants for families in which a grandparent or relative caregiver has been appointed guardian.

Relative caregivers shoulder a unique burden, created all too often by tragic circumstances. In most cases, the caregiver is someone who believed their child-rearing days were far behind.

The Respite Fund allows these caregivers relief from the demands of raising a child, often allowing them to deal with emergency needs and situations.

### KINSHIP FUNDS ARE USED FOR:

- CHILDREN'S HEALTH — GLASSES, DENTAL CARE, HEARING CARE
- CHILDREN'S ENRICHMENT— TUTORING, SCHOOL SUPPLIES, SUMMER CAMP, SCHOOL TRIPS, SPORTS, SCHOOL UNIFORMS, CLUB FEES, SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS, VOCATIONAL OR TRADE SCHOOL SUPPLIES
- COUNSELING

### RESPITE FUNDS ARE USED FOR:

- HOUSING EXPENSES—SHELTER, CHILDREN'S FURNISHINGS, UTILITIES
- FOOD
- TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES INCLUDING GAS, CAR INSURANCE, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
- CHILD CARE EXPENSES—DAY CARE TUITION, BABY SITTING
- PERSONAL CARE ITEMS

Don't let this important program be eliminated from our State



### CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND COUNCIL

The Kinship and Respite Fund are programs of the Children's Trust Fund, a division of the Department of Social Services. The Kinship and Respite Fund are administered in partnership with the Connecticut Probate Court. Grants are available to relative guardians across the State.