



Appropriations Committee Public Hearing, February 17, 2012

Written testimony regarding **H.B. 5014**, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013.

Submitted by : Galit Sharma,

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Galit Sharma, I am a clinical supervisor of the Nurturing Families Network at the Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc., in New Haven. I would like to thank you for recognizing the positive impact of the Nurturing Families Network and for preserving its funding.

Your continued commitment to early parenting programs is critical to help Connecticut's children grow physically and emotionally healthy and enter school ready to learn. Brain development and child development research consistently show that a child's development starts at birth (and even before). It is in these first months and years of life that children learn how to think, how to interpret the world around them, how to control their emotions and how to respond to others. All of these skills are essential to their success once they enter school, even preschool.

Home Visiting programs for early parenting education and support that reach parents during this crucial time of development are the front line of defense against adverse environmental factors that affect children's ability to reach their full potential.

This early parenting support increases parents' understanding of their children's needs, supports the development of healthy attachment and helps children enter preschool and kindergarten ready to learn.

Early parenting support and education that begins at the time of a baby's birth could be key to decreasing the achievement gap in our schools. The windows of opportunity that open for learning in the baby's brain, combined with a new parents' desire to provide their new baby with the best life has to offer, present a unique opportunity to partner with families at the time of birth and help parents prepare their children for a healthy, successful and happy life.

Once again, thank you for preserving the funding for the Nurturing Families Network and for enabling us to continue to work towards strengthening this state-wide, coordinated effort of providing early parenting support to high-risk families.

Thank you for your time and support,

Galit Sharma

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