

# NHFA Family Alliance

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The Honorable Senator Toni N. Harp and Representative Toni E. Walker  
State of Connecticut Appropriations Committee

**Re: Support for the Retention of Funding to Support the State of Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative**

Madams Chairwoman and Members of the Appropriates Committee, I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of continued funding for the State of Connecticut's fatherhood work.

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 fathers, 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 from the research and from our own data 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 state and society. 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 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We know that fathers in the Male Involvement Network achieve increased employment, better ability and motivation to pay child support, closer involvement with their children and better outcomes for their children.

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 support magistrate division and the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement throughout the state to improve collection rates – In New Haven we have worked closely with the family magistrate division to support non-custodial fathers contribution to the economic well-being of their children.

Until now, the State has acted wisely and has successfully supported programs that are stopping the cycle of fatherlessness and are helping to reduce child poverty at a very small cost to the State. Without continued funding, thousands of children and their parents will not receive critically needed services to achieve healthy family relationships, self-sufficiency and 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 resolve our budget challenges without dismantling programs that are effective and cost efficient. Responsible fathers – who play key roles in child development and family economic success- create strong families, and strong families lead to good outcomes for children.

We respectfully request that you maintain funding in the Department of Social Services budget that supports fatherhood programs. The continued 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 and reduces future cost. Thank you for taking the time to listen and to do this difficult work on behalf of the fathers, families and children of Connecticut

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