

**Testimony of Patrick Sheehan-Gaumer, Case Manager/Group Facilitator  
Fatherhood Initiative Program  
Madonna Place, Inc.  
240 Main St.  
Norwich, CT 06360**

**Prepared for the Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing – February 22, 2013  
Public Hearing on the Governor’s Proposed Budget**

To Senator Harp and Representative Walker,

Hello. My name is Patrick Sheehan-Gaumer. I’m a Case Manager and Group Facilitator in the Fatherhood Initiative at Madonna Place in Norwich.

I’m here to ask you to reinstate the funding for the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative. **The six state certified fatherhood sites need a total of \$500,000** to continue providing the services for fathers that have made Connecticut a national leader in encouraging father involvement. We work with dads of all kinds. Single fathers, fathers who only get to see their kids every other week, military dads who want to be there for their kids but have been transferred away from their families.

But, I’m not here just to ask you to help these men. Many of the fathers we work with are the ones who have been convicted of theft, assault, drug possession and Intent to Sell. They have had so much conflict with their children’s mothers that they haven’t been present for their kids’ needs. Many of them have been irresponsible and absent. They come to us often weighed down by their guilt and the stigma of their records.

But I’m not here to ask you to help these dads. I’m here to ask you to help their children.

Kids without fathers are more likely to be placed in foster care, to be placed on state assistance, to drop out of school, to have kids of their own before they reach 20, to go to jail, to have their own children removed from their care, and I could keep going. But I don’t think I need to. I think you all know that kids do better with both parents involved in their lives. The question is how to do it. Every day we work on the solution. Every day we help fathers re-engage with their kids.

The state of Connecticut’s continued financial support is the only way we can continue doing this important work.

We take referrals every week from DCF, from DSS, Child Support Enforcement, the DOC and the Judicial Branch. The judges, probation officers and social workers don’t have anywhere else to send these fathers for guidance and support besides our fatherhood programs.

\$500,000 can sound like a lot until you look at how much our work saves in the long run.

In the last 4 years, our site alone has helped 677 dads- and those dads have had 1,310 children. That's over 1,300 children that have dads more prepared to be a healthy part of their lives. And that's at only one of the 6 state certified Fatherhood sites. The same economic stressors that have put pressure on the State of Connecticut apply to our states families as well. Many of the benefits of funding the Fatherhood Initiative will not be seen for years, but not all of them. We know that more men are paying their child support today because of our work. We know that more dads are seeing their kids every week because of our work. We know that men who are more involved in their kids' lives are far less likely to be incarcerated. We know that we have helped men make those better decisions that have saved the State of Connecticut the cost of incarceration.

Every month we are thanked by dads who tell us we are the first program to really listen to them, to help them organize themselves and to help them be proactive.

Reinstating the \$500,000 would give each site approximately \$83,000 each. The state is not our only funder, but it is our most important. Please reinstate funding for the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative for \$500,000.

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Thank you.