

Testimony of Jesse Grant

Appropriations Committee
Regarding Governor Malloy's Budget Proposal re-Human Services

February 22, 2013

Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to comment on Governor Malloy's proposal regarding funding in the Department of Social Services.

My name is Jesse Grant and I am an outreach coordinator for Charter Oak Health Center (COHC), a federally qualified health center just a few blocks away from here. Charter Oak serves about 25,000 people every year, most of whom are extremely low income.

I am concerned about the governor's proposal to decrease the income limit for parents on HUSKY A from 185% to 133%. The people who would lose access to HUSKY under this proposal are parents of children and are living very close to the poverty line. They will not be able to afford to buy health insurance on their own, as they often cannot afford some of the most basic things in life, like a new pair of shoes for their children or nutritious food for their families.

I believe that everyone should have access to health care -- and everyone can get quality health care at health centers like Charter Oak, because no patients are turned away. But without HUSKY, many of these parents will lose the sense of security it provides and they may put off their own health care needs as a result. And health centers like Charter Oak do rely on HUSKY for some of the funding that is necessary to keep them running and to continue to provide needed services.

In my role at Charter Oak as an outreach coordinator, I am on the front lines every day in Hartford, in shelters, churches and city events, seeking out people to try to re-engage them in their health care. The individuals with whom I work are down on their luck but they can come to the Charter Oak Health Center and get the services they need, regardless of whether or not they can pay for it -- and they will be treated with respect.

Just this week, I met a family from the war-torn country of Sierra Leone -- a woman, who had been raped and shot repeatedly; her father, who had hid in the jungles for years; and her boyfriend, who had been run over by a car. They had endured years of war and personal harm and are now in America. At Charter Oak, we are going to get them the services that they need to build their new life. Where else can they go to get the health care and other services they need?

That's why health centers like Charter Oak are so important for our state. Please support health centers -- and their patients. I ask this Committee to reject the proposal to change the income limits for HUSKY A.

Thank you again.