

Written Testimony, February 22, 2013
Kara A. Capone, MA, MPH
Chief Operating Officer
New Haven Home Recovery
153 East Street, New Haven, CT 203-492-4866 (office)
6 Hillview Avenue, Hamden CT 203-288-7449 (home)

Good Evening. My name is Kara Capone and I am the Chief Operating Officer for New Haven Home Recovery, Inc. NHHR provides emergency shelter, supportive housing, family stabilization and furniture to over 1,600 men, women and children annually. I am here today to talk about the complete elimination of the Family School Connection Program, funded through the Children's Trust Fund and to ask that the funding be restored in its entirety.

The Family School Connection Program provides intensive home visiting services to families whose school-aged children are frequently tardy or truant and at risk of school failure. Generally, the children served are not getting their needs met within the home and are at much greater risk for childhood abuse and neglect, developmental, behavioral and health issues. These are the kids who teachers and school personnel are on the fence about reporting to DCF. Instead of calling DCF, they call us. In New Haven, NHHR has partnered with the Fair Haven K-8 School to implement and run this program. The top five reasons for referral into FSC include: Unstable housing/homelessness; unmet basic needs; issues with language comprehension; domestic violence; and learning disabilities. Once in the program, parents are given tools to help them build skills that make them more effective parents, feel less intimidated and isolated by becoming involved with school-based activities and their community, and help them help their children value education. The byproduct of reducing abuse and neglect, while working within a school setting, is that we are also able to reduce the achievement gap. In New Haven, we saw a 56% reduction in overall absences and tardiness after becoming enrolled in FSC. We also saw that 86% of children either increased or maintained their grades. Now, let's keep in mind the type of student we are working with. These are students who did not come to school on time, or had frequent unexcused absences; they are homeless or living in a 2 bedroom apartment with about 15 other people; they have learning disabilities; they have trauma histories; English is not their primary language; and more often than not, they have never received any form of early childhood education. These are the kids who fell through the cracks and we are their safety net.

When we looked at the family stabilization component, we also found some excellent results. In New Haven, **92%** of the families enrolled in FSC were able to maintain or increase their income. This is up from 85% compared to last year. Across the program sites, parental involvement in school significantly improved. There were also statistically significant differences in Parental Community Life Skills specifically in the areas of transportation, budgeting, support services, involvement, hobbies and routines. These are key factors in stabilizing a home.

The FSC is an integral part of the Children's Trust Fund building blocks as they try to craft an integrated system of early childhood education and promote programs that narrow the achievement gap and reduce childhood abuse and neglect. CTF is not being moved in whole and I disagree with that. Simply because the children we serve fall outside of the early childhood

range does not mean they should be tossed aside as if they are beyond help. Well, I firmly believe a nine or ten year old child is well within academic redemption and can succeed in life. But sometimes these vulnerable children and families need some extra help. I understand that with The Children's Trust Fund moving under the newly created Office of Early Childhood Education, the focus will be on children ages 0-5. However, the mission of CTF still remains preventing abuse and neglect and that doesn't stop at age 5. What I don't understand is that a program that can demonstrate positive outcomes will be completely eliminated simply because it does not fit neatly under this new office. In fact, FSC serves plenty of children ages 0-5; our opportunity to enter the home comes from school based referrals for services. However, when we gain access to a family, we work with the whole family – parents, grandparents, guardians, and siblings. Of all the children we have served, 47% are ages 0-8. Unfortunately, it remains the only home visiting program not being consolidated under the Office of Early Childhood Education.

As part of my testimony, I have included our Results Based Accountability fact sheet for your review along with letters of support from families, school personnel, community members and staff who are in favor of keeping this program alive. We shouldn't be eliminating programs that work to prevent the isolation of vulnerable families and children at a time when recent events have made us question what we can do to help students, families and schools.

I would also like to add my support of the Children's Trust Fund Council legislative goals of fully funding all Children's Trust Fund programs. Each is integral in the future success of the children served through every program.

In closing I would like to thank the committee for their time today and will be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.



New Haven Family School Connection Fact Sheet

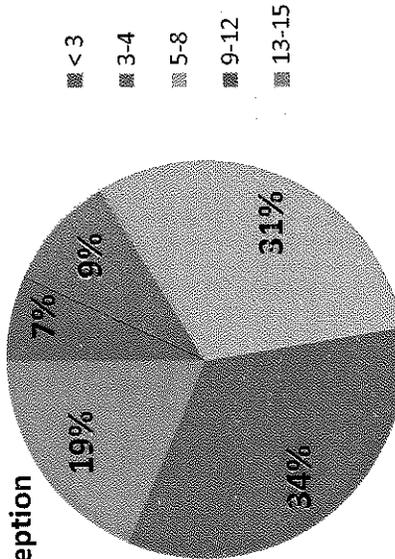


Family School Connection (FSC)

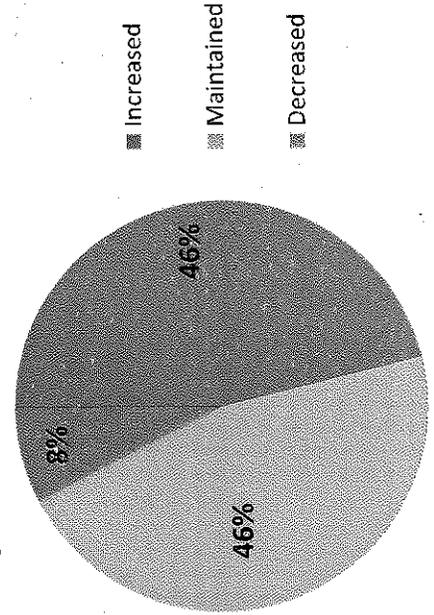
FSC was established in 2009 in the Fair Haven K-8 School in New Haven. FSC works with students who have issues with truancy, tardiness, educational neglect, or behavioral issues. The goals of FSC are to:

- Stabilize families
- Improve nurturing parenting skills
- Strengthen the parent-child and home-school relationships
- Increase parental engagement in their child's education
- Increase students' grades

Children Served, by Age, Since Program Inception

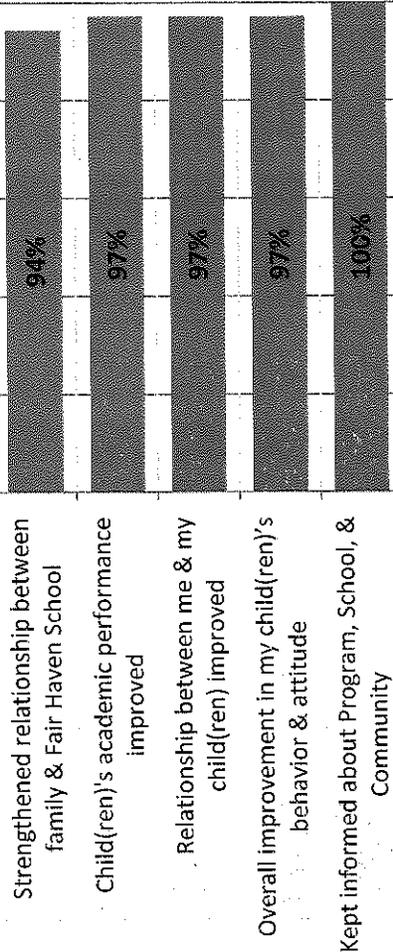


Family Income Change FY2012, Compared to Income at Program Enrollment



Agency Client Satisfaction Survey results (June)

Strongly agree & agree



Agency

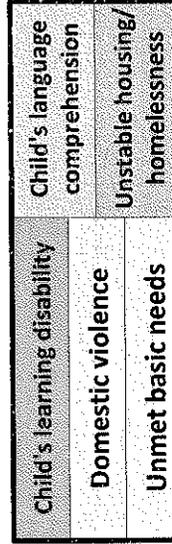
Clients served since program start in 2009

- 122 families
- 495 people (includes household members)
- 229 children (ages 5-15)

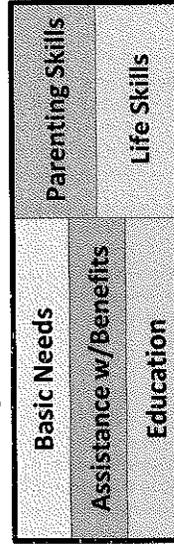
Clients served FY 2012

- 53 families
- 228 people (includes household members)
- 104 children (ages 5-15)

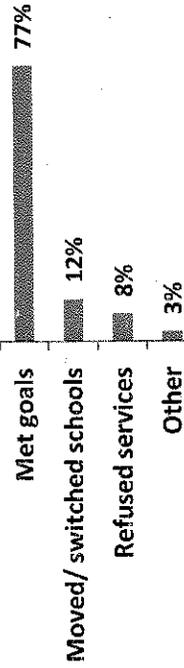
Top 5 reasons for referral



Top 5 services provided



Reasons for Family's Exit from Program



91% of families

served are Hispanic. Of these, approximately 79% are Spanish-speaking only.

In FY2012, home visitors completed 675 home visits with families.

Client Quotes

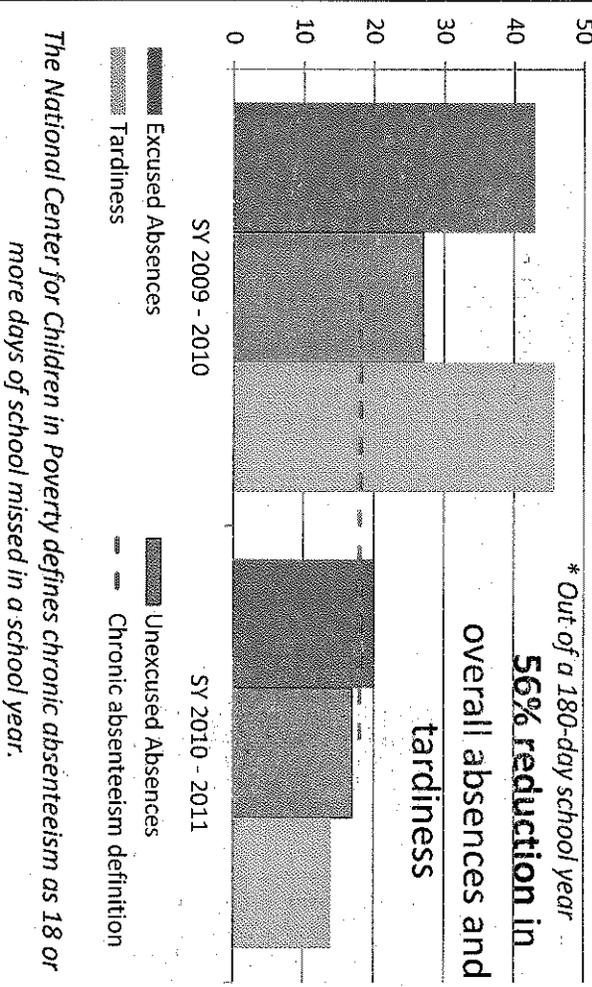
"My family has been able to overcome many obstacles and challenges thanks to the resources the agency has provided."

"Thanks to the services [from] the agency, [my son] has completely turned around, not only in school but at home...I have been able to increase my social skills and rely on my own abilities."

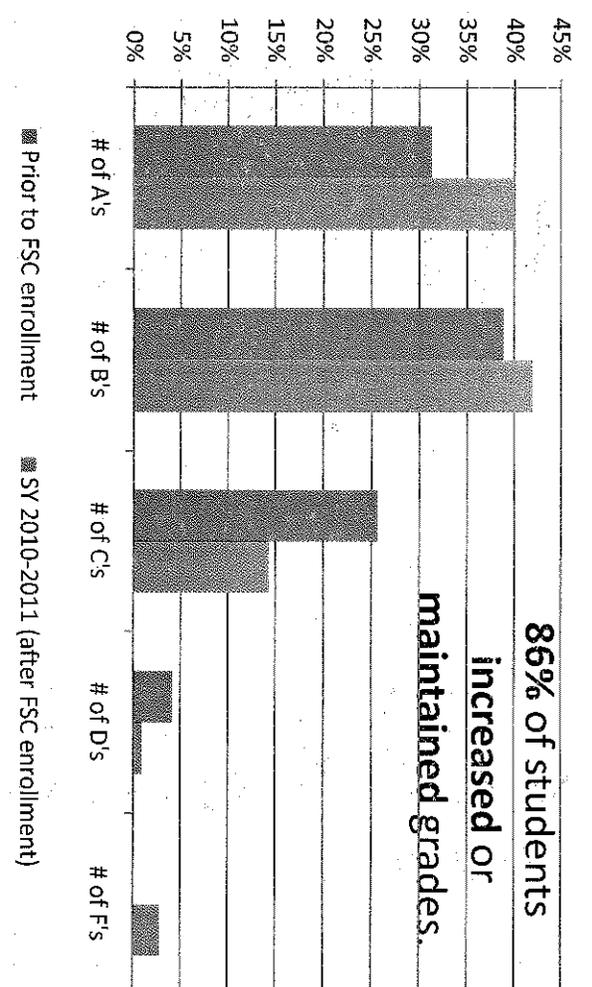
New Haven Family School Connection Fact Sheet



Total # of Missed or Late School Days*

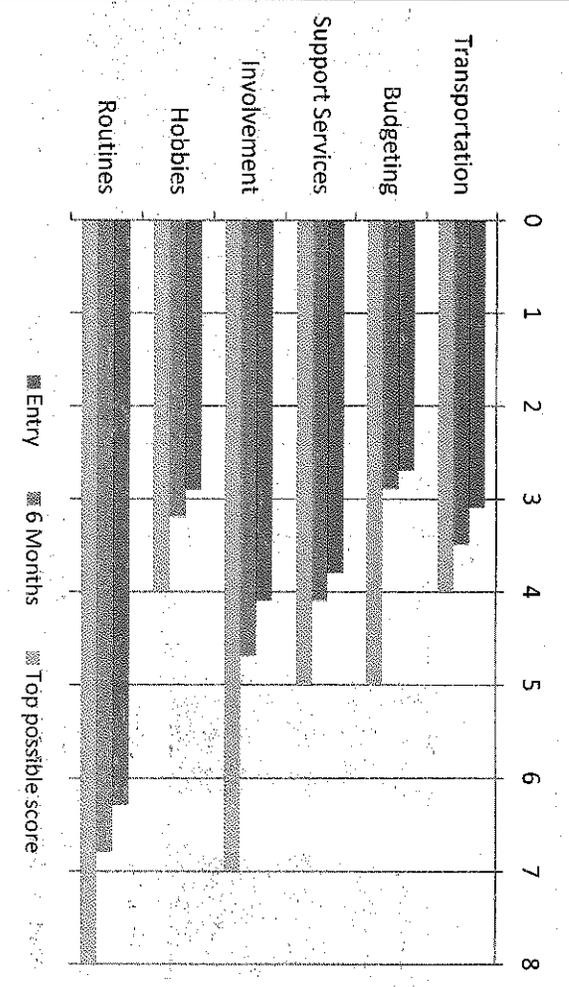


Year over year grade comparison

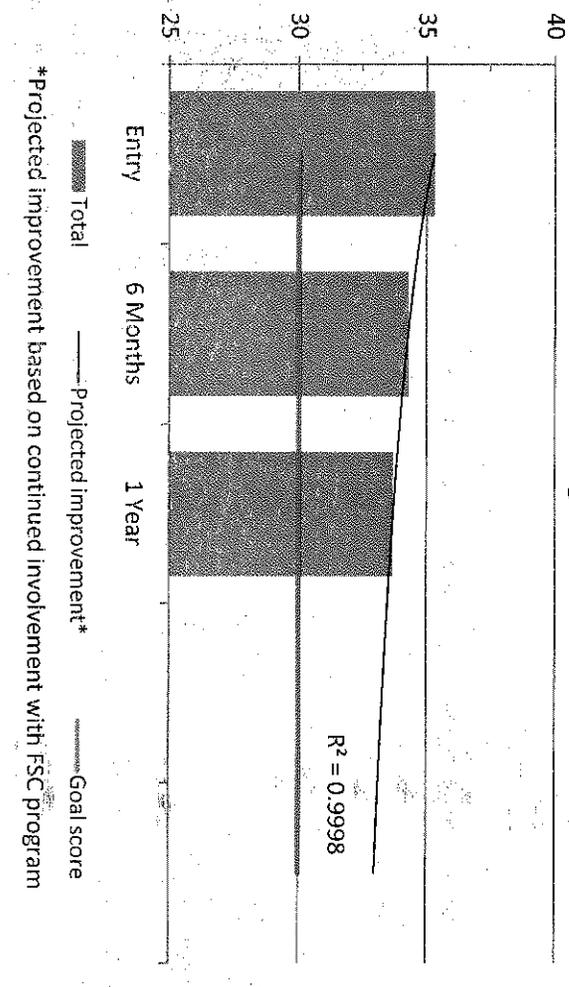


Through in-home visits, FSC Home Visitors work with parents to address issues that interfere with their ability to meet the needs of their child(ren). FSC Home Visitors have helped children improve their grades and decrease the number of absences & tardiness.

Outcome: Parental Community Life Skills Scale survey



Outcome: Child Abuse Potential - Rigidity survey



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.

FAIR HAVEN SCHOOL

164 Grand Avenue
New Haven, CT 06513
203-691-2600



To Whom It May Concern:

Family School Connection's quest to help and advocate for our students is boundless. They will exhaust all avenues to pursue resources and programs for our students. Their role at our school is invaluable & is an integral part to securing strong connections between school & homes.

Our school is grateful to Family School Connection for their unlimited time and unyielding support to our school and community at large. I always know with every referral each family is looked into with sincerity and conviction. I am amazed at the academic growth of the students of whom they are working with directly have demonstrated. I appreciate them, sharing the data to support that of all the families they work and pleased to say all the no students failed any subjects, this truly speaks volumes to the emphasis that his organization puts on education.

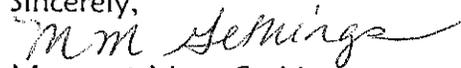
We are so very grateful for all of the wonderful programs and initiatives that Family School Connection (FSC) has afforded our children and families in our school community in the last three years.

FSC's generous donation of coats, hats, gloves and uniforms have helped so many families at our school. The help you have given to our families who have become homeless is utterly amazing. The work and commitment to be able to place our families in a shelter, find an apartment and then help a parent find employment has provided security for children who have never felt secure prior to your help. This past holiday season exceeded all expectations for our children.

The commitment FSC makes to our school community has made a difference in the lives of so many children in our school and neighborhood, and we can never express how truly grateful we are for their continued support.

We hope our shared commitment to helping children and families continues to grow.

Sincerely,


Margaret-Mary Gethings

Principal

Fair Haven School K-8

February 20, 2013

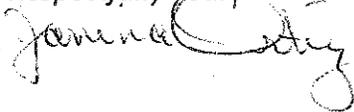
Dear Governor;

I am writing this letter on behalf of my family in the hope that our legislator, senator and you will reconsider eliminating the Family School Connection program which has become a beacon of light and hope for so many families like myself. I am a single mother raising a daughter on my own, I am a person with limited resources and have recently found a part time job. Thanks to the services and support I receive from the FSC program I have been able to acquire several skills which motivated me to return to work, I have decided to return to school as well and complete my degree in nursing. My support worker has helped me to see that I have a lot to offer my daughter and it's important to me that I be a positive role model.

I am aware that many grants focus on early child development, but because of the investment made in children of five and older they too get the chance to receive the services they need. I couldn't understand why it was necessary for the school to refer my daughter to this program but after a year I see the results of their involvement in my life and my daughter. Thanks to the program it helped me to restructure my personal life and therefore help to restructure my daughters and provide her a more stable environment.

I appeal to the board and hope it reconsider its decision to eliminated a much needed program and be made aware of the impact this decision will have on the lives of so many who depend on programs like these.

Respectfully Yours

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jamuna City".

February 22, 2012

Ivette Bracero-Lugo
80 Perkins st
New Haven, CT 06513

Dear Legislaors,

This letter is to inform you that there should be reconsideration in eliminating the Family School Connection Program; I strongly believe that this program has helped many families with their economic struggles. I can say that in my situation, it is very hard for me to communicate with my son's school due to language barrier; my home visitor has been my support with the PPT meetings, and any meetings that I have had to have with my son's teachers.

FSC was able to take me out of a home that was not appropriate for my son and me and push for me to get section-8. They gave me the opportunity to live in one of New Haven Home Recovery apartments which I am currently living in. If it was not for participating in this program I don't where I would be. This program benefits many families in the New Haven Community.

Please reconsider your choice of eliminating Family School Connection and actually provide the program with more funding to expand.

Sincerely,

Ivette Bracero-Lugo

22 de Febrero, 2013

Estimado profesor,

Esta carta es para agradecer que considere y permita al programa de Family School Connection. Yo pienso que este programa ha ayudado a muchas familias con problemas económicos. Puesto a decir que en mi situación la vida difícil comencé con la escuela de mi hijo, mi trabajo me ayudó con PPT, y reuniones con las maestras de mi hijo.

February 21, 2013

Dear Legislators,

I am writing the letter because I heard that this family school connection program would be completely cut, I just wanted to share how much my home visitor has helped me get through living here in New Haven after moving here from Puerto Rico. My home visitor was able to find my shelter because I had nowhere to live. I knew about the FSC program through Fair Haven School here in New Haven, and since the first visit they had with me it has been nothing but positive support in my family's life. Before entering a shelter I was in a Domestic Violence relationship in which my home visitor was able to save me from and my children, they supported me with clothes, uniforms, school supplies and food because I had to leave it all behind.

They were able to help me with state assistance and supported my mental health all through the shelter, I was supported with resumes, with job applications, and I was even encouraged to go back to school where I got a certificate in Customer Service. If it was not for the FSC program I would probably be living in a Domestic Violence home with my children, or back in Puerto Rico where life there continues to worsen.

I can say that I am currently a store manager at Edible Arrangements, with their financial support I was able to get my security deposit paid, and I can finally afford an apartment where my kids and I reside. As far as my children they have both received high honors since we began the FSC program, my home visitor assures that my children are doing well in school by attending their schools and speaking to teachers. My relationship with the school and myself is wonderful because my home visitor taught me that I have a voice and I can be heard if I speak up.

I believe that the elimination of this program should be reconsidered.

Thanks,

Katherine Elicier

February 19th, 2013

Dear Legislators/Senators;

My name is Jessica Colon and I am a participant of the Family School Connection Program in New Haven, CT. My family and I have been with the program about 3 years. I am grateful for the many services and resources we have received in that time. Thanks to the program my son has improved a 100% in school and is more tolerable at home as well. We ask that you reconsider your decision in eliminating our program for you have no idea what an impact that would have on the families that depend on these services.

Thank you for your support.

Jessica Colon

141 Church Street

New Haven, CT.

203 850-1458

Estimados Senadores / Legisladores

Me llamo Jessica Colon y soy participante de los servicios de Family School Connection en New Haven, CT. Mi familia participa de este programa hacen 3 años y estoy agradecida por los servicios recibidos ya que gracias a estos servicios hemos podido superarnos en muchas areas. Gracias a este programa mi hijo a podido mejorar en la escuela y en el hogar.

Les pido que tomen en consideración las familias que son impactadas por los servicios que este programa nos brinda, pues son muy utiles y necesarios y para muchas familias con pocos recursos y/o falta de transportación, dificultad de lenguaje es el único apoyo que recibimos.

Gracias por su consideración

Jessica Colon
141 Church St. So. Apt C
New Haven CT. 06519
(203) 850-1458

2-21-13

Dear Legislators

My name is Maria Padilla and I am a mother of 3 very special children. However my 19 year old son is a student in special education class at East Rock school. He has been diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome/Seizures (i.e. staring/drop seizures). up until 2011 my son was unable to attend school due to his disability and the fact that no one would help my get the services he needed. Thanks to the Family School Connection all my children are receiving adequate care. My oldest William has improved so much academically he actually made honors for the first time and Angel is in school learning as he should in a safe environment. I implore you to please reconsider your decision to close the program that has been a refuge and hope for so many with issues like mine and have no where to turn.

as ~~through~~ babies grow so does the
need and services they need.

Please keep us in mind.

Maui Padick



2-21-13

Dear Senator:

I am very grateful to the services I receive from Family School Connection as a single mother of four with limited finances.

Family School Connection helped me to organize my life so that I could provide a better life for my kids. FSC is helping with skills and resources much need to get me back on my career path. I ask that you reconsider your action in eliminating the programs so many families like mine count on.

Mari C. Masain
78 Clay Street
New Haven, CT

2/21/2013

Dear Legislators,

My name is Maria C. Palacios
I participate of the Family School
Connections Program in New Haven.
Thanks to the program my children
have excelled in school, not only has
my son benefit from the resources
and services but thanks to the support
of my worker I am self-efficient, I am
no longer afraid to speak up for myself
no matter how bad my English is.

I am confident today and I am learning the
language and the culture of this country
so that I can be the best I can be and
a positive role model for my children.

Please reconsider your decision to eliminate
a program so many families like mine
depend on and are impacted by. Please allow
other children to benefit from such a wonderful
program like the Family School Connections.

Thank you!
Maria C. Palacios

I Yasmelle Crespo am writing
this letter to inform you ~~that~~
Family School Connection has helped
me become a better person about
myself and has helped me with
resources in the community. Before
this program I struggled financially
I was evicted and they supported me
with finding shelter, when I was
down on food Family School Connection
was able to provide me with it. They
are very well involved with my child
school and support him with any
academic difficulties he is having.
I would like for the program
to continue supporting my family
they are needed.

Thank you,
Yasmelle Crespo

ESTIMADOS SENADORES / LEGISLADORES
yo Gladys Hernández soy participante de
los servicios Family School Connection
en New Haven, CT mi familia participa
de este programa hacen 3 años estoy
agradecida por los servicios que hemos
recibido. Gracias a este programa mi
hijo ha podido mejorar en la escuela
y en el hogar les pido que tomen
en consideración las familias que son
impactada por los servicios que este
programa nos brinda pues son muy
dificiles y necesario y para muchas
familias con pocos recursos y la falta
de transportación, dificultad de lenguaje,
es el único apoyo que recibimos.

gracias por su consideración.
Gladys Hernández

134 Exchange St

Gladys Hernández

2/22/13

A quien pueda interesar:

Aprovecho esta oportunidad para comunicar que estoy muy contenta con el programa de New Haven Home Recovery.

Soy una madre soltera madre de 2 hijos y por situaciones tan difíciles en mi vida estube 5 meses en un Shelter, fue así como entre al programa.

El programa desde el principio fue de gran ayuda para mi y mis hijos un gran soporte tan emocional, físico y económico.

Se que hay muchas familias a igual que la mia que se han beneficiado del programa.

En los momentos mas difíciles fueron y son de gran ayuda y soporte cubriendo las necesidades ayudando a obtener nuestras metas.

Seria de gran ayuda que este programa continuara ayudando familias tal y como lo a echo con la mia que da de su parte dando las gracias.

Yayra L. Pulchall

Zuleima Vargas
65 Hallock st
New Haven, CT 06519
407-520-9813
Zuleima_vargas@yahoo.com

This letter is to inform the legislators the importance of the Family School Connection (FSC) program and how this program has impacted many families in the New Haven, I am currently a home visitor for this program, and besides this impacting my personal life it impacts my professional life as well. I currently have 21 families on my caseload with a waiting list of about 14 families. In New Haven alone we have served 122 families since 2009 about 80% to 90% of the families have completed the program successfully and have achieved so much in their lives because of the support of the FSC program. This program serves families that are on that point of DCF calls, and because we as home visitors step into their homes before that occurs then we are able to bring those DCF calls down. Something as small as a phone call is a big deal to families and if we as FSC home visitors can prevent that for these families then why not.

To give you an example of the great work FSC home visitors do I will give an example of a success story that we have accomplished with a family.

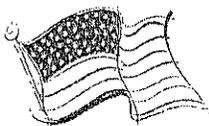
- Client began the program with a purpose of finding a job and finding a place she could call home. Client at the time of entering the FSC program was doubled up with a friend. The client slept on the couch in the living room, and children slept on an air mattress next to the mom. Target child slept with two siblings on the same mattress she was having trouble sleeping at night and would fall asleep in school. This writer began working with the client on resumes, the client was not from this town but she was very well educated, while working on the client's resume it seemed like she had so much experience in the work field and her resume was very impressive. This writer attended CT works with client to get her resume looked over. She began sending out her resume to different hospitals and after three weeks the client was hired and now has been working at St. Raphael for a couple of months. The client was able to save money after creating budget sheet with this writer and is moving to her own apartment, this writer was able to provide client with free furniture for the whole apartment. Target child is able to have her own bed, and the client states that her children are very excited, and are looking forward to a successful school year.

There are many more stories to share; I feel that the cut of the program will impact the families and the relationship that they have slowly created with the school their children attend. I feel that the cut should be reconsidered and the FSC program should continue succeeding the way that it has.

Thanks,

Zuleima Vargas





MRS. YARITZA M. ROMAN
56 Cedar Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06519
Phone: (203) 606-2344 | yari76@sbcglobal.net

February 20, 2013

Governor Malloy
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor, Senators and Representatives:

As a lifelong community member of New Haven Connecticut it is my pleasure to write a letter in support of the Family School Connection Program. I respectfully urge you to oppose cuts to the program.

Reductions in these programs would be detrimental to our school districts and communities that are already experiencing severe challenges because of local and state economies.

I have experienced firsthand the positive impact that the Family School Connection Program has made in our community. In my humble opinion, it is because of programs such as Family School Connection that parents are able to feel confident, encouraged and empowered to take an active role in their child's education.

Thank you for considering my concerns regarding education funding.

Regards,



Mrs. Yaritza M. Roman

February 20, 2013

Hello my name is Jessica Nielsen, I am writing this letter to ask not to close down the Family School Connection program. It has helped me in so many ways. For example: I am bipolar and dyslexic. My home visitor has helped me keep me on track with my medical issues and my children's as well.

She has been an advocate for me at my children's school and supports their academics. She continuously helps me with everyday life skills and has helped me become a better parent. She helps me organize and budget my financial issues. My home visitor is very important to my life and the lives of my children.

Thanks,

Jessica Nielsen
New Haven, CT

Feb - 20 - 13

Please don't close the program
it help me in so many ways

for example: My Name is Jessica Nielsen

I am bipolar and dyslexic

She = Zully help me keep me on track

with my and the kids Medical

~~and~~ appointments and help me

with the school she advocate for
me at school meeting and helps

me fill out documents and

help me keep on track with

every day life skills which I

need to be a better mom, she helps

me in many way that I need

help with. she helps me

calling all the doctors and doing
the bills. She keeps me on track

With The House Witch
at times I need that

she has help me in so
many ways in ways I
need help

she is very important
to me and the kids

~~too~~ ^{July help me}
Please don't in so many
way that

Close

Jessica Melrose
95 Clay St
New Haven Ct
06513

02/22/2013

Kevin Kearney
73 Hart Acre Rd.
Southington, CT 06489

To whom it may concern,

I urge you to oppose cutting funding to the Family School Connection Program (FSC) funded through the Children's Trust Fund. The FSC program at New Haven Home Recovery is an integral force in stabilizing many homes in the Fairhaven section of the city of New Haven. FSC works hard to keep these families from having to become involved with the Department of Children and Families. This program provides the help these families need, but the schools and families cannot provide. Parenting skills, relationship buildings, as well as instruction on how to properly clean a home are just a few of the services performed by FSC. Without this program, many children will fall through the cracks and start skipping school. They will become disconnected totally from school, their education, and eventually their future. The Family School Connection is more than just some program; it is an extended family of caregivers for many deserving families needing their services. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Kevin Kearney

