



Appropriations Committee
Governor's Budget Proposal regarding Department of Social Services
Testimony by Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director
Connecticut Parent Power
Friday, February 22, 2013

Thank you Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director of Connecticut Parent Power a statewide parent-led organization that engages, educates and mobilizes diverse parents from across the state to act on issues that matter most to them improving outcomes for all children in areas of early childhood, care, education, health care reform and K-12 school systems.

Connecticut Parent Power is concerned regarding the reduction of funding for Care4Kids proposed in HB 6350 and the associated restriction of program eligibility regarding the following: Care4Kids, HUSKY A parent eligibility, HUSKY Infoline, and the Children's Trust Fund. We urge the Appropriations Committee to consider the negative impact on children and families regarding these cuts.

Care4Kids

The Governor's budget proposes cut to Care4Kids of \$3.27 million (3%) in FY14 from the final FY 13 budget after rescissions. We urge the Committee to maintain Care4Kids funding.

The Governor's budget plan closes roll-over into Priority Group 6 in the Care4Kids program. Currently, families may enroll in the Care4Kids program as long as their income is at or below 50% of the State Median Income (SMI). However, if an enrolled parent's income increases and exceeds the income threshold, the parent is rolled over into PG6 and allowed to participate in Care4Kids until household income reaches 75% of SMI. This proposal closes that roll-over option as of July 1, 2013 to new parents.

The Governor's proposal would create a cliff effect for parents who are working, struggling to make ends meet, and making efforts to increase their income for the benefit of their household. Parents who are succeeding in the workplace and who receive a salary increase will lose Care4Kids, and in many, many cases, will be forced to leave employment due to lack of child care. This eligibility cliff will dissuade parents from seeking to climb the career ladder. We urge the Committee to keep PG 6 open in the Care4Kids program.

HUSKY A Parents

The Governor proposes to reduce HUSKY A, eligibility for parents from 185% to 133% of the Federal Poverty Level. It is estimated that 30,000 parents would lose HUSKY A coverage. The Governor's budget indicates that these parents will secure coverage through the new Health Insurance Exchange.



We are very concerned that the cost in the Exchange will be unaffordable for many parents, even when federal subsidies are taken into account. There will be significant co-pays and deductibles in the Exchange, which will cause family hardships that we can prevent. Studies show that even small cost-sharing requirements pose a barrier for low-income individuals to seek needed health services. Also, more children will not have access to health care they need by cutting these parents from HUSKY. A large body of research finds that more children are likely to be covered by health insurance when their parents are also covered. We urge the Committee to ensure parents earning up to 185% FPL do not lose affordable health care that is critical for maintaining wellness for all.

HUSKY Outreach

The Governor's proposal to cut HUSKY Infoline outreach by more than half in FY14 and eliminate funding in FY15 is also of concern. HUSKY Infoline is a valuable tool for parents who are seeking health care for their children and themselves.

Children's Trust Fund

We support the Governor's proposal to maintain funding for two vital programs in the Children's Trust Fund: Nurturing Families and Help Me Grow. Nurturing Families is a respected, evidence-based home visitation model that serves at-risk, first-time mothers. This program provides a critical bridge for young mothers as they navigate through many challenges in the first years of the child's life. Help Me Grow is a prevention program designed to identify children at risk for developmental or behavioral problems and to connect children to existing community resources most effectively.

However, several trusted and respected programs in the Children's Trust Fund are eliminated in the Governor's budget: Family Empowerment, Family School Connections, Children's Law Center, and the Kinship Fund, which many of our Connecticut Parent Power constituents benefit from. Although these programs are smaller in scope, they are family and child-centered with supports that are most helpful and critical to families impacted.

We urge you, the Appropriations Committee to please maintain funding for these programs, as each program prevents larger number of children/youth to be lost in a system that is already, complex enough.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to your continued support.

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