

Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Governor's Budget Proposal Re: Department of Social Services
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Executive Director
Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Friday, February 22, 2013**

The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance thanks the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's budget proposal concerning the Department of Social Services. I am Maggie Adair, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children, birth to age eight, in the areas of early learning, health, safety, and economic security.

I would like to call attention to the Governor's budget proposal concerning Care4Kids, HUSKY A parent eligibility, HUSKY Infoline, and the Children's Trust Fund. We urge the Appropriations Committee to consider the impact of these cuts on children and families.

Care4Kids

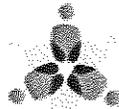
The Governor's budget proposes cut to Care4Kids of \$3.27 million (3%) in FY14 from the final FY 13 budget after rescissions. We urge the Committee to maintain Care4Kids funding.

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.



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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. Studies show that even small cost-sharing requirements pose a barrier for low-income people to seek needed health services. Also, more children will not get the 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.

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.

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. These programs are smaller in scope, but for the families they help, these services are critical. We urge the Committee to maintain funding for these programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.