Written Testimony Regarding the Connecticut Healthy Start Program
Submitted to the Human Services Committee
Submitted by: Evelyn Guzman, Hispanic Health Council
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Good morning, Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie, Committee Members:
My name is Evelyn Guzman, and I work at the Hispanic Health Council here in Hartford. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss with you the critically needed and cost-saving work of the Connecticut Healthy Start Program.

Healthy Start is the only statewide maternal and child health program that provides thousands of low-income women and children each year with the core public health services needed to promote healthy pregnancy, infancy and early childhood. Healthy Start is uniquely positioned to link pregnant women to insurance coverage and prenatal care early in pregnancy, and to seamlessly provide related case management and health education on high-priority public health issues such as:

- perinatal depression
- smoking during pregnancy and second hand smoke exposure
- oral health care, and
- domestic violence

An independent evaluation of Healthy Start found that compared to women of the same demographic, Healthy Start participants gave birth to infants with high birth weights –and that compared to a statewide rate of 10.1%, Healthy Start participants had only a 7.8% rate of "pre-term" births.

These outcomes help to meet our state's public health objectives and save between 2 and 5.4 million dollars, net of program costs, and much more if we include would the costs of long-term health, developmental and educational supports often associated with preterm births.

I'd like to add that $1.2 million of Healthy Start's 1.4 million dollar funding allocation captures 50% federal match, resulting in $600,000 of additional federal dollars brought to Connecticut by Healthy Start. The governor's proposed reduction of state funding would result in the loss of most of that federal reimbursement.

The evaluation also indicated a number unmet of areas of need for Healthy Start services in Connecticut. In 1999, the Healthy Start allocation was $2.5 million, and the number served was approximately 13,000. Severe cuts already made to Healthy Start severely reduced service capacity. Current funding of 1.4 million dollars enables service to approximately 5,000 pregnant women and children – an efficient cost per participant of just $280.

A February 2013 Connecticut Voices for Children report based on 2010 HUSKY data indicates that: Mothers in the HUSKY Program and Medicaid are less likely than other Connecticut mothers to get early prenatal care, and their babies are more likely to be preterm and low

birthweight. They are also more likely to smoke during pregnancy.

This information indicates the need for a more robust Healthy Start, further indicated by the imminent major expansion of the state's Medicaid population, and the fact that the state is having difficulty processing applications in compliance with federal regulations. This population needs not just enrollment, but the essential case management services provided by Healthy Start. The governor's budget recommends a 66% cut to the program, totaling $933,311, which would decimate the program's already weakened statewide capacity. I urge you to not only restore full funding for Healthy Start, but to enhance the program's funding, in the interest of the health of Connecticut's population, and in the interest of the state's fiscal health.