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John Webster <pjwebster@att.net>  
Monday, March 25, 2013 11:59 AM  
AppropriationTestimony; Rep. Ritter, Elizabeth; Sen. Stillman, Andrea;  
Ernest.Hewitt@cga.ct.gov; Rep. Urban, Diana; Senator Maynard; Danielle Chiaraluce  
**Subject:** Maintain Full Funding for OIC

Dear CT legislators,

This letter is being sent in support of that sent by the Executive Director of OIC New London, Danielle M. Chiaraluce, requesting that there be no reductions to OIC, to the Department of Labor for the purposes of funding OIC, and to community employment programs set in place by state agencies for which OIC may be eligible to apply.

Rather than simply repeating the information that Ms. Chiaraluce has provided you, I would like to affirm the case she has made for OIC's record in enabling low income people to help themselves by availing themselves of the counseling, job training, and employability skills that OIC offers them. I have been a Board member of OIC New London since 2005 and have seen first hand the difference OIC has made in the lives of its students/clients.

I would, however, like to add two things to what Ms. Chiaraluce has told you. At our February meeting we were given some figures comparing our performance with state averages in job readiness, employment, and job retention. The comparison is striking. While our job readiness score is the same as the state average (86% vs. 87%), our employment rate was higher (63% vs. 52%), and our job retention rate started out the same after 30 days (79% vs. 80%) but rose significantly after 60 days (79% vs. 68%) and 90 days (75% vs. 54%). Thus any reduction in OIC's allocation is a cut in one of the state's most effective programs and OIC has now faced so many reductions that they are cutting not into the "fat" but into the "bone and muscle" of this agency.

The other thing concerns priorities in these days of belt-tightening and budget cuts. It is usually programs like OIC's that get hit hardest when budget cuts are made. In this way budgets get balanced on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens. Such action might be rationalized on the grounds that private philanthropy should and will make good the difference when the government reduces its contribution.

Unfortunately, that has not been our experience at OIC in the face of past reductions. Moreover, an article in the latest issue of The Atlantic ("Why the Rich Don't Give" by Ken Stern, p. 75) pointed out, the rich--those who are in a position to fill the gap left by government cuts--much prefer to give to elite institutions rather than to "a social-service organization or to a charity that principally serves the poor and the dispossessed". This is sad, but it is a fact of life that OIC has had to face. Thus if low income people are to be helped to help themselves in the highly effective ways OIC has made possible, we cannot depend on private gifts to compensate for what the government cuts. Our most vulnerable citizens will lose chances to prepare themselves to seize job opportunities opening up in an improving economy.

I recognize that you have some hard choices before you, but maintaining funding for OIC at current levels should not be one of them, given the population OIC serves and the demonstrated difference it has made to both its clients and to the State economy.

Yours sincerely,

(Rev.) John C.B. Webster  
Vice-President, Board of Directors  
OIC of New London County