



Catholic Charities

Archdiocese of Hartford

February 21, 2013

**TESTIMONY OF LOIS NESCI, CEO, CATHOLIC CHARITIES  
House Bill 6350- AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**

Co-Chairs Senator Harp and Rep. Walker and esteemed members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education. My name is Lois Nesci, CEO of Catholic Charities, and I am here to testify on the Governor's budget proposal for the Dept. of Education which includes elimination of funding for neighborhood youth centers.

Catholic Charities' Centro San Jose (CSJ) Neighborhood Youth Center is funded through the State Department of Education, and is the only provider of afterschool/youth programming in Fair Haven that is offered at no cost to youth and their families, and serves exclusively economically disadvantaged youth. Youth Programming includes mentoring, tutoring and homework help, health, nutrition and athletics, leadership development and college/career preparation.

Without a Neighborhood Youth Center, CSJ would be forced to eliminate its Youth Program entirely, severely and dramatically reducing the availability of services in a neighborhood experience persistent, intergenerational poverty. **Without this program the 180 youth we serve annually would no longer be able to attend youth programming due to the financial constraints of their families, and would be at increased risk to engage in activities that negatively impede their development and harm their community.**

Neighborhood Youth Center programming has a significant impact on the entire traditionally underserved Fair Haven community. Fair Haven has a significant youth population. Of its 13,753 reported residents, 34.4% are 18 years old or younger (4,731). (*Data Haven*) CSJ has been serving this community for more than 50 years and is viewed as a valuable resource by parents with young children and youth including families involved in the immigration system, and families who do not speak English or speak English as a Second Language. CSJ is unique in Fair Haven because it exclusively targets youth between the ages of 12 and 18, offering programming appropriate to their age, maturation level, gender, culture, and community needs. Data from the New Haven Independent Crime Log reveals the afterschool period of the day has the highest number of incident reports in Fair Haven, further emphasizing the need for community-based youth programs which use evidence-based approaches to achieve the goal of preventing violence and illegal drug use.

Perhaps our largest accomplishment is seen in the youth we serve. Past participants return as adults and credit many of their successes to the Neighborhood Youth Center. Teachers and other community members report that the youth who participates in our programs become leaders rather than followers. Youth reports more positive experiences in school. Youth also experience significant long term improvements in key areas such as communication, leadership, personal life, and problem solving skills.

We respectfully request that the above information is considered during this budget process. Thank you for your time and consideration for this very serious matter.