



Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, Inc.

March 21, 2013

TESTIMONY REGARDING RAISED BILL HB 6616 AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S PREVENTION BUDGET

Submitted to: The APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

By: LISA HONIGFELD, Ph.D. – Vice President for Health Initiatives, Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI) and the Children's Fund of Connecticut

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and other members of the Appropriations Committee, I am Vice President for Health Initiatives of the Children's Fund of Connecticut and its subsidiary, the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI). Our mission is to promote primary and preventive health and mental health care for all children in Connecticut, with a particular focus on the underserved. Our Board Members include key state leaders in health care and members of the academic, education and business community who are committed to improving developmental outcomes for children in Connecticut.

Based on our work to bring evidence-based and best practice models to Connecticut's health and mental health systems, we are committed to promoting the role that prevention can play in growing children who are ready to succeed in school and participate fully in our State's workforce and communities. We are concerned about H.B. 6166 and its implications for prevention initiatives in Connecticut.

Prevention programs use dollars to keep children healthy, both physically and mentally. Prevention efforts ensure that children are healthy and ready to learn when they enter school and contribute to their overall health and well-being throughout their lives. For example, we know that children who are overweight or obese in the very earliest years are also obese in adulthood and at risk for a variety of serious and costly health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease and orthopedic problems. Prevention services that address at-risk parents strengthen families to allow for positive parenting and socio-emotional development. We also know that children who receive all of their preventive health services are more likely to have their needs identified at a young age, when intervention is most effective and cost efficient.

All children need prevention, but children who live in poverty need prevention services to a far greater degree than their more well-off counterparts. Poor health and mental health outcomes are far more frequent among children living in poverty. Research has undeniably shown that poverty puts children at risk for a broad spectrum of health and developmental problems.

Connecticut cannot afford to renege on monitoring prevention initiatives for its most vulnerable citizens, children living in poverty. I urge this Committee not to let Connecticut's agencies off the hook by weakening prevention reporting requirements and disrupting movement toward a goal of 10% of appropriations earmarked for prevention programs. The Child Health and Development Institute will continue to do its part in strengthening preventive services for children; please ensure that state agencies do theirs.