State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN

Testimony on Raised Bill No. 6616
George Coleman, Board Chair and Laura Lee Simon, Chair Emerita
March 22, 2013

Senator Harp, Senator Kane, Representative Walker, Representative Miner and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

We ask that you keep prevention a priority for Connecticut's children and families by striking down Raised Bill No. 6616. Raised Bill No. 6616, An Act Concerning the Governor's Prevention Budget, calls for the elimination of Section 4-67v of the Connecticut General Statutes. This section currently requires that for each biennial budget for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2008 to June 30, 2021, the Governor's budget document shall, within available appropriations, include a prevention report that corresponds with the prevention goals established in section 4-67x. The prevention report must:

(1) Present in detail for each fiscal year of the biennium the Governor's recommendation for appropriations for prevention services classified by state agencies that provide prevention services to children, youths and families;

(2) Indicate the state's progress toward meeting the goal that, by the year 2020, at least ten per cent of total recommended appropriations for each such budgeted agency be allocated for prevention services; and

(3) Include, for each applicable budgeted agency and any division, bureau or other unit of the agency, (a) a list of agency programs that provide prevention services, (b) the actual prevention services expenditures for the fiscal year preceding the biennium, by program, (c) the estimated prevention services expenditures for the first fiscal year of the biennium, (d) an identification of research-based prevention services programs, and (e) a summary of all prevention services by each applicable budgeted agency identifying the total for prevention services included in the budget.

For the purpose of the report, the Office of Policy and Management has defined prevention as "policies and programs that promote healthy, safe and productive lives and reduce the likelihood of crime, violence, substance abuse, illness, academic failure and other socially destructive behaviors." The prevention programs and services highlighted annually by OPM working in conjunction with the Departments of Children and Families, Developmental Services, Education, Labor, Mental Health and Addiction Service, Public Health, Social Services and the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division serve children from birth to age 18 and are designed to prevent or eliminate at-risk behavior before a problem occurs and to promote the health and well-being of children.

The report provides a useful snapshot of the programs by agency including a statement of the number of children and families served, a description of the purposes of the program, a

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description of the performance-based outcomes consistent with the Legislature's emphasis on results-based accountability as well as long-term agency goals, strategies and outcomes to promote the health and well-being of children and families, overall findings of the effectiveness of prevention within the agency, a statement of whether there are methods used by the agency to reduce disparities in child performance and outcomes by race, income level and gender. The report provides a common set of goals to align the preventive work of these agencies in the areas of children's health, safety, learning and housing.

It has been and continues to be a critical support for the on-going work of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council. In fiscal year 2012, these agencies expended $297,402,897 to administer 32 comprehensive primary prevention programs for children and families. The report provides important information and provides an opportunity to track movement toward our mandated goal of a ten percent commitment of expenditures on prevention by 2020 with greater transparency.

The Commission on Children has documented the benefits of a preventive approach for more than two decades. Key COC publications, like the "Playbook for Prevention: The Winning Gameplan for Kids and Connecticut" created in partnership with prevention spokesperson Coach Jim Calhoun and "A Children's Stock Portfolio: One Smart Investment" document the research on promising practices and return-on-investment of a preventive approach. Immunization, Home Visitation, Parent Engagement, Quality PreSchool, Early Reading Success, After School Programs, Positive School Climate and Mentoring are all proven to promote children's health and well-being and reduce costs associated with teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and juvenile justice.

As Coach Calhoun so aptly put it, prevention is "...all about kids and their preparation". We know from recent research on brain development that children who receive consistently sensitive and responsive care in the first years of life function better emotionally, socially and academically well into adulthood. In the case of young children and brain development, providing an ounce of prevention is what's needed – a pound of cure later on is too little, too late.

Keep the spotlight on Connecticut's prevention policies, programs and services. Reject Raised Bill 6616. Prevention is the best investment our state can make to support the greatest outcomes for Connecticut's children and families. Thank you.

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