

February 14, 2014

To the Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Susan Quinlan and I am the Executive Director of Families in Crisis, Inc. We are one of six certified sites that provide fatherhood programming for the State of Connecticut. Our agency works with fathers in prison designed to enhance their abilities to meet the social, emotional and financial needs of their children both while incarcerated and upon release.

We ask this Committee to restore the funding for the statewide fatherhood initiative (\$195,000) to the six sites that was cut from the CT Department of Social Services budget. Since initially funded over seven years ago, and named in honor of the late Representative John Martinez, these programs have successfully achieved outcomes that strengthened not only children and families but the communities they reside in. Services that assist fathers obtain employment, financially contribute to their families and actively co-parent their children show not only immediate benefits but strengthens families/communities for future generations.

Fatherlessness is a critical problem in Connecticut. When we consider where many of these missing fathers are – we need look no further than our prisons. The majority of these fathers report a marginal relationship with their children before they went to prison. Yet, when we talk to their children they share that they have the best connection with their dads when those fathers were in prison. Parenting programs in prison can and do provide a valuable opportunity to bring fathers together with their children. Our programs build parental commitment and skills while dads are incarcerated that will be built upon when discharged. Children greatly benefit when they have two parents that care for their well-being.

Families in Crisis, Inc. has a long and successful track record strengthening vulnerable families and communities. I strongly urge you to continue funding this important work – for today and tomorrow's children and families.

Without this funding, thousands of children and their parents will not receive critically needed services to achieve healthy family relationships and self-sufficiency. Responsible fathers – who play a key role in child development and family economic success create strong families, and strong families lead to better outcomes for children.

Thank you for your time and if you have any comments or questions please feel free to contact me at Families in Crisis, Inc. 860.727.5810.