



**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee/Human Services Subcommittee
On H.B. 5030, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal
Year Ending June 30, 2015**

**John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative Funding
Department of Social Services**

**Submitted by: Barbara Tinney, Executive Director, New Haven Family Alliance, Inc.
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Good afternoon Representative Walker, Senator Bye and members of the appropriation committee. My name is Bruce Trammel, I am the Senior Case Manager for the New Haven Family Alliance/Male Involvement Network (MIN). MIN is a State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services certified fatherhood program and I'm here in support of the overall DSS budget. We want to acknowledge the Department of Social Services for its support of fatherhood services in Connecticut and we want to thank the Legislature for its allocation of funds in the biennial budget in this second year. We urge the committee to fully support the fatherhood programs you have invested in and to restore the \$195,000 to the Department of Social Services budget allocation for fatherhood services in its fiscal year budget allocation ending June 30, 2015. These funds supported the six original certified sites in DSS prior year budget. Although it is a modest amount of dollars, (\$32,500 per site), it represents a significant portion (35%) of our fatherhood budget.

The NHFA is a non-profit organization that serves over 700 children and families each year from the greater New Haven area. Over 90% of the agency's clients represent New Haven's most vulnerable populations. The Male Involvement Network, a program of the NHFA, is a collaboration of fatherhood stakeholders including non-custodial, non-residential fathers, community based organizations and institutional partners. MIN has

been in operation in New Haven for fourteen years offering comprehensive case management, parent education for fathers, job readiness and support group services. We worked closely with the late Representative John Martinez in his foundational work on fatherhood in Connecticut and we helped shape the 1999 Fatherhood legislation in our State.

In fiscal year 2012 – 2013, Fatherhood Initiative Program (FIP) funding supported engagement of 77 non-custodial fathers. Twenty-nine (38%) of the 77 fathers served by MIN through the FIP achieved at least three out of five priority outcomes identified by DSS. These priority outcomes include: improve and maintain compliance with child support orders (43%), improve ability to obtain and maintain consistent employment (42%); improvement in their relationship with their children (56%); exhibited improvement in the state of their behavioral health (42%). Twelve fathers whose children were involved with the Department of Children and Families improved their collaboration and cooperation with DCF staff to the benefit of their children. We are here today on behalf of the fathers, mothers and children, in Connecticut, whose families have been transformed by the work of the Male Involvement Network, and our fellow certified fatherhood sites.

Connecticut was one of the first States in the country to implement fatherhood legislation and to convene a Fatherhood Council. Our efforts to address the issues of fatherhood, father absence and father involvement by promoting responsible fatherhood have produced impressive results for father, mothers and, most importantly, children. Relevant data provides evidence that the problems associated with father absence are monumental and that responsible fathers are important to children's economic, social, educational, moral, and spiritual well-being.

We know from national research and from our own data that the absence of fathers in families that are poor creates substantial negative consequences for mothers and their children and that these consequences need to be addressed in order to engender a healthy productive city and society. What is it that we know? We know that children in father-

absent homes are five times more likely to be poor. We know that father absence increases the risk of teen pregnancy; increases the odds that a juvenile will be incarcerated and that youth will leave school before completing the 12th grade. Eighty-five percent of youth engaged by the New Haven Family Alliance Street Outreach Worker Youth Gun Violence prevention and intervention initiative reside in families where fathers are absent. We also know that fathers in the Male Involvement Network and fathers served by other certified sites in Connecticut achieve increased taxable income from employment, better ability and motivation to pay child support, closer involvement with their children and better outcomes for their children. Continued investment in responsible fatherhood that promotes better outcomes for children benefits all the people of the State of Connecticut. Investing in fathers and families is prudent; it reduces future costs.

We all understand that the budget decisions made by this appropriations committee must reflect allocations that are extremely effective and efficient. We can think of no expenditure that better meets the core mission of the Department of Social Services, and of government itself, than one so strongly proven to strengthen families, improve children's outcomes and prevent future costs. Fatherhood services supported by DSS funding have been proven again and again to work – and to save the state many times the amount of their cost in later entitlement and safety net expenses. There can be no question about the impact and effectiveness of these funds. Our programs meet rigorous independent program standards and have proven their ability to use best practices to bring fathers into positive and functioning relationships with their families and children. The certified fatherhood sites partner with all relevant support enforcement entities - IV-D, the family magistrate system and the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement throughout the state to improve collection rates – In New Haven we have work closely with the family magistrate division to support non-custodial father's contribution to the economic well-being of their children. In addition, The Male Involvement Network, our certified fatherhood program partners, and other fatherhood stakeholders including the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Corrections, the Judicial branch of Court Support Enforcement, the Support Court Magistrates and others are working with DSS

and the Charter Oak Group to develop a rigorous Results Based Accountability framework to better measure the outcomes we achieve for children, families, communities and the State.

The State of Connecticut has acted wisely and has successfully supported the certified fatherhood programs that are attempting to break the cycle of fatherlessness and child poverty at a very small cost to the State. These services are critically needed to prevent thousands of children from sliding further into poverty. The involvement of a father is in many cases a pivotal factor in a child's success in school and life. I believe that we can solve our budget crisis without dismantling programs that are effective and cost efficient.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and to do this difficult work on behalf of the fathers, families and children of Connecticut.

Respectfully Submitted,

The New Haven Family Alliance, Inc.
Male Involvement Network