



Council 4 AFSCME
Testimony before the Appropriations Committee of the
Connecticut General Assembly
February 14, 2014

Good evening, Happy Valentines Day. Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Matthew Brokman. I am a Legislative Representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 32,000 public and private employees.

Our union urges you to please make sure that the Department of Social Services and the Department of Children and Families are properly staffed. Both of these agencies have been historically understaffed. We appreciate that this proposed budget adds back some positions in these agencies, but more are needed.

The Department of Social Services is probably the most understaffed agency in state government. Our union has testified many times before about the impossibility of DSS workers being asked to handle as many as 1,000 applications or requests for assistance per worker. With the implementation of new methods of processing benefits, workers now are dedicated to call centers and seeing applicants on demand in the 12 DSS offices. The backlog of work, phone calls, and long waits for applicants can be solved by DSS redirecting more resources to front line staff and away from layers of management. There has been improvement, but not enough. We believe DSS could use 200 more workers.

DCF faces similar staffing challenges.

Our DCF local reports that social worker caseloads are in excess of what was agreed upon with the court monitor. What would greatly help right now is an increase in the staffing of social work case aides. This is position assists social workers by providing transportation, supervision of visits, and other various supports.

I'd also like to point out that the Connecticut Juvenile Training School is greatly understaffed. A few days ago 7 first shift workers had to be mandated over to work second shift due to the lack of available staff.

We urge you to not privatize the duties of the Soldier, Sailors and Marines Fund to the American Legion. This taxpayer funded institution, with a proud 150-year history and needs to stay under taxpayer control.

The respected UConn Economic Quarterly reported last year that CT is a lean spending state. Those of you who are versed in the budget know this.

The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported in 2013 that 50% of Americans are working poor or outright poor. The average working family has lost 40% of its annual income since 2007 according to the U.S. Federal Reserve. Unfortunately, the federal government has made cuts to

food stamp funding which may adversely affect up to 68,000 struggling Connecticut families. Our members urge you to restore that funding.

Thank you.