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**Testimony of the City of New Haven
Before the Appropriations Committee**

Regarding
Judicial Department Funding

Submitted by
Jason Bartlett, Director of Youth Services
February 19, 2014

Senator Beth Bye, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

The City of New Haven is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Judicial Department Budget in support of the continued funding of the Youth Violence Initiative Program.

New Haven's Police Chief Esserman in support of this grant to New Haven stated,

"I would hope that every American Police Chief would agree that the best way to fight crime is to invest in our youth and not arrest them."

I hope members of the Appropriations Committee will agree with our Chief. The following is a snapshot of our violence statistics in New Haven:

- 2011: 34 Homocides/133 shootings
- 2012: 17 Homicides/92 shootings
- 2013: 19 homicides/66 shootings

The Youth Violence Prevention Initiative Program funds evidenced-based strategies to address and reduce violence among young people in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven.

We believe that our funding of Youth Programs over the years has been a success and we have complied with our reporting requirements and submitted the metrics to OPM on a timely basis.

We all recognize that youth violence is the second leading cause of death among 10 to 24 year olds in the United States, and is widely regarded as one of the Nation's most significant public and community health issues. In New Haven, we see this issue directly; as 15% of the 34 homicide victims (5) in 2011 were below the age of 18. The consequences of youth gun violence are complex and multifaceted; annual treatments for gunshot victims are estimated at \$100-\$125 billion per annum. The toll on communities and families is also significant:

increased cost of health care, reduced workforce productivity, decreased property values and disrupted social service provisions. A review of the literature indicates a correlation between socio-economic status and increased risk factors associated with serious, violent and chronic juvenile delinquency. As risk factors increase, the likelihood of juvenile delinquency and violence increases (as well as the overall prevalence of violence). In New Haven, as in other urban communities, gun violence involving youth and young adults is concentrated in poor, primarily African American and Hispanic communities, where social and economic difficulties combine to produce severe stress.

Following the recommendations of the New Haven Health Department in its 2011 report, the City's violence prevention efforts will seek to replicate "community violence prevention interventions that are currently recognized as best practices [which] focus on the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and relationships of individuals."

The Youth Violence Prevention Program in New Haven builds upon existing programs and partnerships focusing on enhancing the capacity of existing prevention and intervention strategies to expand economic opportunities for youth and improve access to positive social activities. The program targets programming among three categories: 1) Youth Job Training and Readiness; 2) Youth Leadership, Mentorship and Mediation; 3) Pro-social interventions including but not limited to: literacy, physical health and wellness, social and emotional behavior, mental health, sexual health, homeless youth, special needs youth, youth job readiness, youth leadership, youth mentorship or youth mediation. As a complement to existing programs these programs take referrals of high risk youth from the Street Outreach Worker Program (SOWP), New Haven Police Department (NHPD) and New Haven Board of Education Guidance and Dropout Prevention and Truancy (NHBOE).

We have been receiving positive Results Based Accountability (RBA) Outcomes from our community partners and we anticipate continued demonstration of improved participant outcomes including: better attendance, improved self esteem and decreased violence or aggression.

This program has the potential to demonstrate improved outcomes for hundreds of City youth and improve our community. It is imperative that we continue to grow Violence Prevention Programs and part of our continuing efforts will be to work with the Board of Education to create a data base that identifies disengaged youth which will be shared between the City, BOE and our collaborative partners to direct programming in the future.

Please continue this vital funding.

Thank you for your consideration.