



1477 Park St.
Suite 2A
Hartford, CT 06106
Telephone (860) 243-1806
Fax (860) 243-0100
www.covenanttocare.org

February 27, 2015

Appropriations Committee Testimony

I am Dr. David Santis, executive director of Covenant to Care for Children.

I am here tonight to voice my opposition to the proposal in the Governor's and OPM budget to eliminate Covenant to Care for Children's funding. While I understand that a number of difficult and painful decisions must be made in order to balance the budget in these difficult times, I implore you to oppose this particular cut, which will harm our neediest and most helpless citizens---the countless children who have no voice.

Covenant to Care for Children is a statewide non-profit agency that provides assistance to abused, neglected and/or impoverished children. We provide basic, essential goods for children, age's birth to 18. These basic, essential goods include new twin beds, car seats, toiletry items, diapers, and so on; anything that a child needs to succeed in school and life.

Covenant to Care for Children is unique in that we partner with over 200 faith and/or community based organizations to provide children with these basic essential goods. Many of the children receiving these goods are involved with the Department of Children and Families or are at a high risk of becoming involved with the Department. Often the goods provided by CCC, prevent the removal of the child from the home, or, in some instances, results in the reunification of the child with their caregiver(s). In still other cases, the basic goods provided prevent disruption of the family.

In FY 14, CCC provided goods to over 13,000 children in Connecticut. In FY 15, after two years of rescissions, CCC's contract with the State amounts to \$151,000.

Budget documents released last week describe the cut of Covenant to Care for Children's contract as eliminating or reducing "Lower Priority Contracted Services." Providing beds to kids that don't have one, a school uniform and/or back pack, working to stabilize a home environment with the basic necessities like food and clothing and a bed to sleep in, is a "lower priority"?

Please oppose the elimination of Covenant to Care for Children from the budget.

Thank You

David V. Santis, Ph.D.
Executive Director



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Fast Facts for Covenant to Care for Children, Inc. (CCC)

All figures are for FY14, unless noted.

Covenant to Care for Children provides for the most basic tangible needs of children in Connecticut, ages birth to 18 who are victims of abuse, neglect and/or who are impoverished.

We serve the entire state of Connecticut.

Last Fiscal year, 13,035 children statewide received basic necessities (beds, clothing, coats) through CCC's network of faith and community based organizations, volunteers, individual donors and businesses.

Our Programs:

Adopt A Social Worker (AASW) provides basic goods for kids. Faith or community based organizations adopt a children's protective service caseworker and make an agreement to provide for the material goods needed by the child and their caregivers. 9,848 children received goods; 75% referrals were for children within the DCF system. No other organization in CT has agreements with over 200 organizations to provide these basic goods for kids. There are over 1,000 volunteers connected with the program.

Critical Goods Delivery Program for children is our response to the needs of families who at risk of losing their children or who are being reunified with their children and must have certain material goods before that can happen; beds, appliances, cribs, household items. 1,568 children were served in this program with most requests coming from the Family Assessment Response system; thereby, keeping these children out of the DCF system. 18.6% of the requests were to preserve a family, 3.3% to reunify, and 73.4% to support the family.

Children's Enrichment Fund for children responds to unusual requests for children and youth. Examples are camp experiences, haircuts, lessons, tutoring, special books, or other aids. 1,619 children were served in this program, with 21% being referrals from DCF. 91% of the requests of the requests provide support to a family, while 5.7% were to preserve a family.

Crisis Food Support Program (a partnership with Asylum Hill Congregational Church) is a program for delivery of fresh and staple foods for one-time emergencies in families with children in Hartford. 124 children and 73 adults received assistance. We get most food from Foodshare or local donations.



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Our largest funder is a contract administered by the Department of Children and Families

- CCC is receiving \$247,099 for FY 15 to support the Adopt a Social Worker program that provides for the basic needs of children. For each \$1 received, \$6.80 was returned to the state in goods and services.
- Our contract was subject to rescission for the last two years for a total of almost 16K.
- The current budget proposal recommends the elimination of funding of our contract; the narrative notes that we are “Lower Priority Contract Services.”

Some basic facts about the organization:

CCC is 28 years old.

Our total operating budget is \$482,400 for July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015.

CCC has 6 employees, 3 full-time and 3 part-time.