

Written Testimony of Will Marquez, Bilingual Case Manager & Group Facilitator
The Fatherhood Program
Madonna Place, Inc.
240 Main Street
Norwich, CT 06360

This letter is in opposition to the proposal to eliminate funding of the three sources for fatherhood programming.

1. The John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative Programs, funded by the Department of Social Services since 1999.
2. The Department of Children and Families “Lower Priority Contracted Services” Fatherhood Initiative.
3. The Office of Early Childhood, Children’s Trust Fund line item.

I’m writing to ask you to reinstate the funding for the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative. The six state certified fatherhood sites need to continue providing the services for fathers that have made Connecticut a national leader in encouraging father involvement. Many of the fathers we work with are the ones who have been convicted of all crimes and backgrounds. They have had so much conflict with their children’s mothers that they haven’t been present for their kids’ needs. Many of them have been irresponsible and absent. They come to us often weighed down by their guilt and the stigma of their records. Besides these fathers, we also work with dads of all types. Single fathers, fathers who only get to see their kids every other week, military dads who want to be there for their kids but have been transferred away from their families. **I’m not writing to ask you to help these dads. I’m asking you to help their children.**

Kids without fathers are more likely to be placed in foster care, to be placed on state assistance, to drop out of school, to have kids before they reach 20, to go to jail, to have their own children removed from their care, and I could keep going. But I don’t think I need to. I think you all know that kids do better with both parents involved in their lives. The question is how to do it. Every day we work on the solution. Every day we help fathers re-engage with their kids.

We take referrals every week from DCF, from DSS, Child Support Enforcement, the DOC and the Judicial Branch. The judges, probation officers and social workers don’t have anywhere else to send these fathers for guidance and support besides our fatherhood programs.

The same economic stressors that have put pressure on the State of Connecticut apply to our state’s families as well. Many of the benefits of funding the Fatherhood Program will not be seen for years, but not all of them. We know that more men are paying their child support today because of our work. We know that more dads are seeing their kids every week because of our work. We know that men who are more involved in their kids’ lives tend to progress in their own lives due to a growing relationship with their children. We know that we have helped men make those better decisions that have saved the State of Connecticut the cost of judicial and incarceration.

Reinstating the funding would give each site and dads hope once again. The state is not our only funder, but it is our most important. Please reinstate funding for the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative for the **KIDS**.

Thank You

Will Marquez
Madonna Place
Fatherhood Program, Bilingual Case Manager
& Group Facilitator

I am also writing in support of the Family School Connection Program within the Department of Education.