



Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance

Testimony of Merrill Gay
Executive Director, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Before the Appropriations Committee
February 27, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Merrill Gay, I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide membership organization committed to ensuring that all children in Connecticut are healthy, safe and ready for lifelong success.

I am here to testify against the proposed changes to HUSKY in the Governor's budget as implemented in HB 6846. We are very concerned about the significant cut made to HUSKY and the impact it will have on children.

The proposed budget would eliminate Medicaid (HUSKY A) coverage for approximately 34,000 parents of children on HUSKY and pregnant women with incomes above 138% of the federal poverty line (FPL). These are parents with incomes with incomes between \$26,700 and \$32,253 for a family of three. These are families who are largely failing to make ends meet now. This budget tells them to make the choice between paying premiums and co-pays that they can not afford or go without. Unfortunately, the experience in other states that have gone down this road is that a lot of these parents will become uninsured. Based on the experience in Rhode Island, we can expect about 10,000 of these parents to become uninsured. Unfortunately when parents become uninsured their children frequently also become uninsured even though they remain eligible for Medicaid (HUSKY). There is an established relationship between lack of insurance for the parent and the risk for children to become uninsured. This is especially true for newborns who will lose their insurance if parents are no longer enrolled in HUSKY A.

The proposal to dramatically reduce the eligibility income for pregnant women from the current 258% of the FPL down to 138% is very troubling. The last thing we need to be doing is creating barriers for pregnant women to get relatively inexpensive prenatal care that can prevent very expensive birth defects and complicated deliveries. The Alliance urges you to consider the potential risk that children's health, especially newborns, will be placed in should this change to HUSKY be put into law, and reject this proposal.