

Testimony Presented to the Human Service Committee of the CT Legislature February 27, 2015

To: Members of the Human Service Committee

My name is William J. Hass, Ph.D., President & CEO of FSW, Inc. of Bridgeport CT and the Board Chair of the **Ct Council of Family Service Agencies (CCFSA)**, an innovative statewide network of family service agencies who work collaboratively to provide multiple programs, including the SAFETY NET Program to support families facing poverty. We are, quite literally, the safety net for families who have exhausted their state benefits and are at risk of losing what little they have. **I urge you to restore the nearly \$500,000 in cuts to the Safety Net Services program. This represents a 20% reduction in this core program to support people struggling with issues related to poverty. Please DO NOT SHRED THE SAFETY NET.**

CCFSA's Safety Net Services Network is a model partnership between CCFSA, DSS and DOL, to help families who receive TANF to achieve self-reliance. We provide intensive, solution-focused case management services and care coordination that identify and reduce barriers to sustained employment. Services are home and community-based and are provided on a schedule and format that best meets the needs of clients. We approach families through a "whatever it takes" style, helping families address their barriers to self-sufficiency so that they can find hope for a bright future for them and their children.

Last year alone this program had approximately 3,500 families referred by DSS and DOL. Of those families referred, our staff worked to break down barriers to assure that families are:

- Safe
- Physically and Mentally Healthy
- Free from Barriers to Self-Sufficiency
- Able to Find Employment, Education and Financial Stability

If these proposed nearly \$500,000 in program funding is not addressed, we will have to significantly reduce our capacity to provide these essential services to people in need. **A 20% reduction would mean that 700 families referred would not be served.** That would mean:

- Families at risk for losing state benefits will not receive interventions and will lose those essential supports for life.

- The single mother of four who has used all of her food stamps can no longer receive basic needs supports to put food on the table towards the end of the month.
- Families will lose their apartments because there will be nowhere to turn when they need help meeting their rent or negotiating with landlords.
- Parents who are struggling will not receive the vital linkages they need to community services because this level of case management will not be an option.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS:

In addition to meeting our contractual goals of getting clients back into compliance so that they may continue to receive state benefits, the Safety Net Services Network provides significant additional economic value to the state. We've embarked on an initiative with the Harvard Business School Community Partners (HBS- CP) to quantify this added economic value to the state.

- Earlier analysis has shown that clients enter the program with an average of 3.28 barriers to self-sufficiency. Upon exit, clients report an average of only .79 barriers.
- Analysis done with the Harvard Business demonstrates over the last 6 months that the program has added an economic gain of \$137,000, which is above and beyond the contractual requirements of getting people back in compliance with DOL. This is measured through reduction in clients receiving TANF benefits, reduction in clients receiving SNAP benefits and in earnings through new employment.

The program is managed through an innovative matrix management system, in which our family service agency members who are in local communities provide the clinicians and case management staff. CCFSA provides program management, oversight and quality assurance. This unique model helps us maximize efficiencies; share best practices statewide and provides a consistent delivery of the model.

The Safety Net Services Program provides vital and core services, through an efficient and innovative model that has proven not only to be effective but to provide significant returns on the investment for the state

**PLEASE HELP RESTORE THE NEARLY
\$500,000 CUT FROM SAFETY NET SERVICES**

