

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 925**  
**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HOME VISITATION PROGRAM CONSORTIUM**  
**February 24, 2015**

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(*Will provide testimony.*)

Good Afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and Esteemed Committee Members:

My name is Carolyn Signorelli, I am a member of the Prevention Partners for Children, successor to the Children's Trust Fund Council. I am here to support Senate Bill 925, An Act Establishing a Home Visitation Program. The creation of this consortium as an exciting opportunity to ensure that Connecticut's current patchwork of home visiting programs become part of a coordinated system where home visitation services are brought to scale to meet the needs of all at risk families. It is critical that the state ensures that its citizens in need are equitably and efficiently served by evidenced based models consistently employing best practices.

The formation of the consortium comes at an opportune time. As I'm sure the Committee is aware, Connecticut, through the efforts of the Office of Early Childhood, was recently awarded by Health and Human Services a \$10,400,000 grant to support its Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs. These funds will allow Connecticut to expand its Parent as Teacher program, formerly called Nurturing Family Network. OEC will hire twenty-five new home visitors, 19 traditional and 6 focused on fathers and men. These home visitors will engage high-risk families early in an infant's life, using the Parent as Teacher's model to promote positive parenting, healthy child development and school readiness until the child is 5 years old. The ability to engage more fathers and intimate partners in home visiting as a result of this grant is an excellent opportunity to lower the risk of serious abuse and injury to children in participating families. The Child First model will also be expanded into four urban areas; Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury and New Britain.

However, in order for the consortium and the home visiting programs to be successful long term by being brought to scale and providing full coverage for Connecticut's at risk families, this state's commitment to prevention will need to be fully funded. The estimated number of children served by all in home services currently provided by the state for FY 2014 was 18,568. This figure includes 9,686 Birth to Three clients; 985 Child First clients, who also serve DCF families; and 2878 DCF clients, creating a probable overlap in service provision to the same families.<sup>1</sup>

But the number of children at risk for abuse and neglect and at minimum in need of an initial home visit is staggering. In fiscal year 2014, 18,700 children, ages zero to five

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<sup>1</sup> Home Visiting Work Team, CT Home Visiting Plan for Families with Young Children, December 1, 2014, OEC.

years, were victims of abuse and neglect according to reports to DCF and there were more infant victims in fiscal year 2014 in comparison to other age groups.<sup>2</sup> The number of children living in poverty in 2013 in CT totaled 501,929.<sup>3</sup> These are just two of several indicators of children at risk of abuse and neglect who benefit from home visiting programs.

We've seen the positive outcomes our existing home visiting programs provide to families in need. For example, ongoing evaluations of the Parent as Teacher program have shown that the high risk families participating in the program have low rates of substantiated abuse and neglect, 1.3– 4.4 percent over a four year period, far less than would be expected for a similar high-risk population of families. Parents demonstrate significant improvements in parenting capacity, attitudes and behavior, completion of high school, becoming employed, in knowledge and use of community resources, and in meeting the developmental and health care needs of their children.<sup>4</sup> Data for the 10 Child First cites reflect improvement in specific areas: 87 percent improvement in emotional/behavioral problems or social competence, 78 % improvement in language development, 80 % improvement in parent-child relationship, and 80 % improvement in maternal depression.<sup>5</sup>

Support for establishment of this consortium and funding its goals will allow Connecticut to reproduce these types of results in a comprehensive and cost-effective manner for all families in need of assessment and prevention services.

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<sup>2</sup> Id. p. 46

<sup>3</sup> Id. p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> PROJECT ABSTRACT: Connecticut Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, OEC, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Id. p. 6.