

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Desirée Caporaso; I live in Shelton and work in Derby for a child guidance clinic, I am the Program Director of an early identification and intervention program. I am writing this letter to ask for your assistance in restoring funding to Community Plans for Early Childhood as a line item in the state budget. I also hope for you to support and co-sponsor House Bill 6004 that will strengthen the relationship between the Office of Early Childhood and local councils.

It takes a village to raise a child, this was true many years ago and it stands to be true today. Councils and Task Forces that make early childhood programming a priority are an example of a community take responsibility for the growth and development of their children. In my role as a Program Director I have had the pleasure of working with the Derby Early Childhood Council (DECC), this group makes it their priority to fund programs and give families the opportunity to have a voice and be heard in their communities. If groups such as DECC were to cease to exist due to the cuts in the budget, the communities they service will be at a loss.

Community Early Childhood Groups sponsor parenting workshops that empower parents and result in a greater connection to their communities. Opportunities offered by DECC include Kindergarten Registration Events for incoming Kindergarten families and Kindergarten Roundtables that bring the public school and preschool providers together to share best practices and resources. In addition, Early Childhood Councils provide a single place for providers to come together to share best practices, resources and data. It is the hub for early childhood issues in the community and eliminates duplication of services, aligns plans and missions and adds efficiency. This cross-sector focus accelerates the pace of change in the community.

In the past year the number of parents involved in community workshops has increased immensely and it continues to grow. The community of Derby, is currently involved in a Study Circle Program with Everyday Democracy, the program took over two years of planning and is now being implemented in our community and schools to discuss racial and economic barriers to student achievement and parent engagement. We have actively engaged community members, students and parents in the process.

DECC and other Discovery Collaboratives are able to provide the variety of programs that they do because to matching funds they receive from foundations such as the Graustein Memorial Foundation; if state funding was cut then the matching funds would be reduced, resulting in a reduction in programs and the community being negatively impacted. I have witnessed parents who felt that they were not heard join the council and take a leadership role in their community. They have increased their self esteem, their children perform better in school and social supports are used less because these families are feeling connected and empowered. Taking away funding, removes these programs, resulting in children, families, schools and ultimately the community as a whole being negatively impacted.

Please put Early Childhood Councils back in the state budget and support HB 6004, for the future of the children of CT, the long term impact will be much more costly.