

Testimony of Deniel Fournier, Director of Children's Program
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Public Hearing – February 27, 2015
Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Committee Members;

My testimony is in opposition to the proposed Elimination of the Fatherhood Initiative programs currently funded under the Department of Social Services.

I am writing this letter in regards to the proposed elimination to the Fatherhood Program at Madonna Place. I have the privilege of being employed by Madonna Place where the Fatherhood Program is a vital asset to our Agency.

I felt I should share what I have witnessed first-hand when fathers come to our Agency in hopes of working with the Fatherhood program. Fathers participate for many different reasons; to seek help in visitation with their child/children, help in maneuvering through the court system, a sounding board as well as someone to process with, help job searching, however, **one of the main reasons fathers participate in the program is to become an active parent in their child's/children's life.** I have witnessed fathers coming in and seeing the look of discouragement on their face and their longing to be a part of their child's life. For some, it is their last chance to gain confidence and skills in parenting, for others they may just need to know that they are not alone in their fight for their child. Through the Fatherhood program **they are given the opportunity to be taught the skills needed to accomplish their goals.**

It is a well-known fact that children thrive far more if they have an active father in their life. I find it unsettling to think that the Fatherhood program would no longer be in existence, the importance of the program goes without saying. Fatherhood involvement not only benefits the child and family but society as a whole. Children need a positive father role model to ensure their success as an adult and/or parent in the future. **I would find it a great disservice to fathers, children and society if the Fatherhood Program were cut from the budget.**