

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Annie Wendel and I am a Wyman Teen Outreach Program (TOP) Facilitator at Family Centered Services of CT, a community-based organization with a mission to work with families to ensure that they are safe and nurturing places where children can succeed. As a TOP facilitator, I service two public middle schools in New Haven and Bridgeport, implementing an evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention model designed to teach students healthy behaviors and problem solving skills while giving them a sense of purpose so they can set life goals and contribute to the community. National studies have shown that TOP lowers the risk of school dropout by 60% and pregnancy by 53%.

Governor Malloy has proposed the total elimination of the DSS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, despite our proven successes and implementation of the kind of model our elected officials are looking for. We use only evidence-based models proven to prevent teen pregnancy and the underlying risk factors. After a rigorous credentialing process, CT has been named a Replication Partner with the Wyman Teen Outreach Program network and must be re-credentialed every two years. The facilitators are trained and then observed on a regular basis to ensure model fidelity. We collect data from the students that are analyzed annually by an outside investigator.

The DSS Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative was endorsed by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee of the CT General Assembly in 2012. This Committee concluded that DSS has established a “solid methodology for TPPI funding that should continue to be applied”, and that state contract requirements and outcome measures were met or exceeded consistently.

It is difficult to understand the wisdom in eliminating a high-performing, evidence-based program that the General Assembly itself recognized as meeting and exceeding its projected outcome measures. Dismantling the program’s infrastructure and services now after years of very thoughtfully considered expansion would be detrimental to all of Connecticut’s citizens, considering the high economic and social cost of unplanned pregnancy. The average cost of DSS-funded teen pregnancy prevention services per student is only \$2430. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, the progress CT has made in reducing teen childbearing saved taxpayers an estimated \$230 million in 2010 alone. Consider, for example, that just 38% of teen girls who have a child before age 18 get a high school diploma, and that daughters of teen mothers are three times more likely to become teen mothers themselves.

I urge you to maintain funding for the teen pregnancy prevention initiative and preserve the uninterrupted delivery of evidence-based services to our most vulnerable youth.

Sincerely,

Annie Wendel

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