

To Whom it May Concern:

It has come to my attention that the Governor plans to eliminate 13 positions from the Department of Social Services, close the Torrington Social services Office, remove low-income adults with children who now qualify for HUSKY from HUSKY and onto an insurance plan through Access Health that they will have to pay for, and eliminates funding for programs such as the Human Services Infrastructure Community Action Program that provides benefits such as the funding match for SNAP.

This really disheartens me and I'm sure others, who work in the "field" firsthand with our community members in need. We are the ones who they come to for help in navigating the system and locating resources that help them maintain economic, physical and emotional stability. Now, more than ever, we have been working ourselves extra hours to try to rectify problems in the DSS system, etc. The thought, I'm sure, was to eliminate workers and salaries and implement a mechanical system that will help people more efficiently and cost less. This is a farce and does not work in the human services arena. What people need are caring individuals, one-on-one attention to their cases and follow-up. The "Centralized Scanning System" at DSS was a failure from day one and we are still trying to pick up the pieces. We spend more time trying to fix the mistakes from the lost applications and re-determinations and computer-generated, impersonal letters than we do in helping our clients find resources to assist them with their daily struggles. The letters are so confusing and scary because they tell someone that he/she is being removed from a program that he/she depends on to survive - and when we investigate we find out, more than half of the time that the computer generated the letters in error. My clients tell me how much they miss having their "caseworker" to speak with when there is a problem. Now they have to wait for 1-2 hours holding on the telephone to speak to someone who doesn't know them and whom they don't know, so that the errors can be corrected.

I can't imagine the horrors of the closing of the Torrington Social Services Office. In some instances, where clients cannot afford to hold on the telephone because they only have cell phones with plans based on minutes, or they are disabled, elderly, etc., sometimes going to the actual DSS is easier than waiting on the phone for so long. What will these people do? Will having less people actually help them to be attended to quicker and more efficiently?

I do hope someone will come up with a better plan. DSS needs all of its workers and our community members deserve to be able to ask for and receive services while maintaining their dignity.

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