

Dear Appropriations:

I am very concerned that the STRIVE program has been eliminated from the Governor's budget. This highly successful program has helped hundreds of Connecticut's neediest residents secure employment and have a chance at the American Dream. I happen to be fortunate enough to participate in this amazing program, which has lead me to obtain full time employment and eliminated the need to receive state assistance.

STRIVE first came to Connecticut in 1998, and Career Resources now manages the program in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven. It has graduated over three thousand people in that time, with over three hundred last year. Over the past 6 years, the State of Connecticut invested roughly \$1.3 million into STRIVE. For this investment, 305 graduates were placed into employment. The combined annualized employment income for these graduates was \$5.2 million this translates into \$781,834 in taxes paid annually or nearly a 400% return on investment to the State. Considering that of the 305 graduates placed into employment, 56% were former offenders, 41% were single parents, 80% were receiving some form of public assistance while 20% did not have a H.S. diploma, the outcomes here are quite remarkable.

The \$270K saved by the state if this program is terminated is but a fraction of the projected two billion dollar deficit and really has a negligible impact on the overall state budget. It does however have an impact on the hundreds of low income and disenfranchised populations that graduate from this program annually and become taxpaying citizens thus reducing the state's liability. Many of these graduates were part of federal and state entitlement programs, but since being employed full time they have reduced or eliminated their participation on public benefits.

Respectfully,

Jessica Cardenas

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