

March 2, 2015

Re: Testimony for March 3, 5pm for the Appropriations Secondary Sub-Committee

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Secondary Education Sub-committee:

My name is Julie Schmitter, Executive Director of Danbury Youth Services, Inc. (DYS). I am very concerned about the proposed cut to the Youth Services Bureau (YSB) monies in the Governors Budget. DYS has provided services in the Greater Danbury Area since 1969 - over 45 years. DYS is the City of Danbury designated Youth Services Bureau and licensed psychiatric clinic through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DYS programs serve over 600 youth and their families per year through the agency's clinical and prevention programs focusing on building life skills for its youth. DYS turns no one away for inability to pay and serves some of the most vulnerable youth and families in the City of Danbury.

Youth Services Bureau (YSB) funding, through the State Department of Education, is crucial to the success of the agency in offering its quality services and also ensures the continued funding of City of Danbury local funding through its matching grant. Here are a few reasons why supporting your Youth Services Bureau is so important:

- Supporting youth strengthens the community through fostering skills that help children meet their life goals – contributing to a healthier society
- Empowering youth to do well in school both academically and socially helps build strong communities and schools contributing to the desirability of living in the City of Danbury
- Challenging youth to learn positive life skills and coping mechanisms boosts self-esteem and confidence leading to better decision making and less negative behaviors
- Being pro-active prevents dangerous and careless behaviors in community youth, which helps raise the quality of life for our children and their families

Consider this story of one of our clients – A true success story!

When Silran Osses came to DYS in elementary school seeking counseling services through the Youth and Family Counseling Program for school related issues, he received much more than just counseling. He received an adult mentor through the agency's One-on-One Mentoring Program.

His mentor, Richard Franks, gave him the one on one attention that Silran needed to become a successful person- assisting Silran with homework and ultimately academic success, supporting him in his goals, and introducing him to the importance of giving back to the community.

While with the mentoring program, Silran also became involved in DYS Earn-A-Bike program, earning a new bicycle, learning valuable team building skills and building

friendships with others in the program. Silran very quickly emerged as a leader and was asked to stay on with Earn-A-Bike to help support its participants and become a mentor.

Silran, now 17, works with the Earn-A-Bike program as a volunteer mentor - giving back to youth in need of a valuable role model. Silran is also an enthusiastic cyclist and works part-time at Bike Express in Danbury while attending Danbury High School.

Help DYS continue to give youth a chance to succeed!

Please do not stop investing in our community youth - they need your help now more than ever! We ask you to fight to restore funding to support your local Youth Services Bureau.

We also invite you to visit our DYS website to learn more about our quality programming at www.danburyyouthservices.org.