

**Testimony of Darlene Hurtado, Clinical Supervisor
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**Prepared for the Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing – March 3, 2015
Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget**

Good Afternoon Senator Bye, Rep. Walker and Committee members:
My name is, Darlene Hurtado, I am the Clinical Supervisor of the Family School Connection Program at Madonna Place in Norwich CT.

Please, do not support Governor Malloy’s plan to eliminate the funding for Family School Connection. Family School Connection is a prevention program funded by the Office of Early Childhood - Children’s Trust Fund – Family Support Division. The program provides comprehensive home visiting and support services for families whose children are frequently absent, truant, have academic or behavioral problems, or often come to school unprepared. **Children whose parents are involved in their education do better in school academically and this in turn helps to close the achievement gap.** In Norwich and over the past six years, the Family School Connection Program has helped over 125 families, which include over 180 children.

I have worked in nonprofits for over 30 years and I find the Family School Connection Program to be unique and effective because it addresses all of the barriers to strengthening families and helping them to succeed. I have witnessed transformation in families because of the support they receive and achievements like getting a managerial job, moving their child to a school that better suits their needs where they thrive, parents becoming assertive advocates for their children at school meetings, and parents setting and achieving goals like getting their driver’s license, signing up for adult education, reading to their children at home and helping with homework, and becoming more positive parents with strong parenting skills. The partnership parents have with their home visitors helps them to increase their confidence, follow through with goals and objectives, and learn to be a stronger self-sufficient family. Cutting funding to this program will leave families without the support to increase their coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even when under stress. It also will affect their children’s ability to be successful in school.

In closing, I quote from a Family School Connection family, **“I have been in the Family School Connection Program for almost 2 years. The program has helped me make better and stronger connections with my child’s school. It has also helped me make better connections in my community and in all things in life. Please keep funding for the Family School Connection program.”**

Prevention Works and it’s an investment in our future.