

Testimony of Darlene Hurtado, Clinical Supervisor of Family School Connection,
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Public Hearing – March 3, 2015
Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Committee Members;

I am urging you on behalf of all the families at Moriarty and Wequonnoc Elementary Schools in Norwich to not cut funding to the **Family School Connection Program**. This program is providing much needed support services to strengthen high risk families, to help prevent child abuse and neglect, and to help parents increase their level of involvement in their children's education. It also helps parents increase their knowledge of Parenting and of Child Development, helps parents develop social connections, increase concrete supports and develop parental resilience. Since inception, it has helped over 100 families, which include 142 parents and 165 children.

I am the Clinical Supervisor of just 2 Home Visitors who have provided parent support and education services to 52 parents and over 75 children in the past year. I have observed the effectiveness of our home visit program and the overwhelming challenges that families face. The Home Visitors help parents to set and reach goals and help the families to move from crisis situations to becoming a strong, nurturing family that supports their children's, growth and development and success in school. All of our parents want their children to succeed in school but they need our help to develop parenting skills and to address family stresses and challenges that include health and behavioral issues, economic hardships, social isolation, low self-esteem, potential for violence and more. Many of our parents are breaking a cycle of abuse. When families have high levels of stress it makes a difference when they receive additional support and education. The following services are provided to families:

- **Parent education** which includes child development, nurturing and attachment; stress management; budgeting and crisis intervention strategies.
- **Parent school connections** which includes attending meeting with parents at the school; increasing parents comfort level in communicating with their child's teacher; connecting families to support programs in the school such as Bridges, Family Resource Center, School Governance Council, PTO and Pre-K programs; helping parents connect to adult education and ESL services, helping parents obtain school uniforms and effective homework strategies.
- **Case Management** which includes supports to maintain quality of life, housing, food, clothing, utilities, child care, transportation, behavioral and dental health services and employment.

Cutting funding to this program will leave families without the support to increase their coping strategies that allow them to parent effective, even when under stress. It also will affect children's ability to be successful in school. Children are most successful when

parents are involved in their children's education. The **Family School Connection Program** works to help parents meet their quality of life needs so they can be more involved with their children's educational needs. This program has been helpful to school staff as well as helping parents and children. Please consider maintaining the funding for the **Family School Connection Program**.

Why invest in this program? Prevention Works, Prevention Saves and it's an Investment in our Future.