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Subject Line:

***Testimony for March 3, 5pm for the Appropriations Secondary Education Sub-committee***

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

*My name is Marisa Giarnella-Porco and I am a resident of Andover, CT.*

*I am writing to you as members of the Appropriations Secondary Education Sub-Committee to voice my opposition as a Connecticut taxpayer to the proposed cuts included in the Governor's budget regarding Connecticut's 102 Youth Service Bureaus.*

*I ask that you please do all that you can to remove the \$1.3 million dollar cut to YSBs from the Governor's proposal, (which includes the entire Enhancement Grant Line Item currently in the budget at \$620,000 and an approximately \$700,000 cut in the Cost Sharing grant that YSBs receive for being a Youth Service Bureau.*

*The State of Connecticut invests just over 3 million dollars in 102 Youth Services Bureaus statewide. In return those Youth Service Bureaus collectively raise nearly 30 million dollars through the municipalities they serve, through private and public grants, fundraisers and private contributions.*

*As the CEO and Co-Founder of a suicide prevention and mental health awareness foundation, I can assure you that I am aware of the ongoing need for prevention services. Suicide is the leading cause of death for individuals under the age of 25. Over 60% of mental health disorders being between the ages of 14-25, yet often go untreated for years. YSB's promote so many programs that support our communities. Mental health disorders are a serious public health issue. Addressing and identifying these issues and promoting strong families is an investment in Connecticut's economic future.*

*I have been invested in the growth and program expansion of AHM Youth and Family Services for about 23 years, and I have worked closely with them as a state employee (DCF), volunteer and prevention task force member. I have been impressed with their capacity to impact so many individuals in our towns with limited resources. Serving communities involves the development of partnerships and establishing a trusting network. Your proposed cuts would reverse decades of work. Families in our community rely on the programs offered by AHM, especially in times of stress and crisis. Unfortunately, our tri-town area has experienced its share of tragedy, many of them including teenagers.*

*In the last two years YSBs reported having served over 448,000 youth and parents through many of the same programs that our own local youth services (AHM Youth and Family Services) provides to local citizens in our four communities. These programs all fall into the categories of mental health services, juvenile justice services, prevention programs, youth and family development programs.*

*Please help make sure that these cuts do not go through!*

*Thank you,*

*Marisa Giarnella-Porco, LCSW  
President and CEO  
Jordan Porco Foundation  
Andover resident*