

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE
TESTIMONY of STAMFORD YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU
MARCH 3, 2015

Hello Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Secondary Education sub-committee. I have a special greeting for Representative Miller, who is a friend of the Stamford youth service bureau and an advocate for Stamford's children and teens. My name is Terri Drew and I am the Director of Stamford Youth Service Bureau and Treasurer of Connecticut Youth Services Association. I am here to testify in support of youth service bureau programs.

In 1978, Public Act 78-183 of the Connecticut General Statutes established Youth Service Bureaus. The Statute states that YSB's shall be the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide a comprehensive delivery of prevention and intervention, treatment and follow-up services. (See C.G.S.10-19m).

There's no sugar coating this. At a minimum, the cuts to youth service bureaus outlined in the governor's proposed budget would significantly delay the academic, social and emotional success of 448,000 youth and parents served by 102 bureaus across the state over the past two years. I shudder to think what the full impact may be.

For example, in Stamford last year we provided 2,677 unique individuals with services that included employment, alternatives to incarceration, summer and after school programs, academic support and youth activism. Slightly more than half of these children and teens were eligible for free or reduced priced meals at school.

But here's the multiplier effect. By walking through our doors, these nearly 2,700 people had access to our services AND the services of the 100 agencies to which they were referred. The cuts proposed by the governor would deny access to our services and those of our partners to 1,153 individuals. "Other agencies will see them," is a familiar refrain, but the governor's budget renders that statement moot. First, all the budgets of those agencies are being cut and the services provided by the Stamford Youth Services Bureau are unique. No other agency in town has a youth activism initiative. No other agency in town manages a restorative justice center for teens. No other agency in town offers teens with summer employment AND in-school internships. No one.

Given the budget deficit faced by the state, I understand that sacrifices must be made. But a 40 percent reduction in the state funds for youth service bureaus would tear at the social fabric of the children and teens served by 102 bureau's across the state; a fabric that is already frayed beyond repair at the edges.

Respectfully,

Terri Drew

