

Stamford Youth Services Bureau

Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

Connecticut Legislature Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services* *March 3, 2015*

Hello Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Miller and members of the Secondary Education sub-committee and. My name is Michelle Lappas and I am a resident of Stamford, CT since 1998 and have two children in the public school system. I have also been lucky enough to work for the city since 2007 in the Youth Services Bureau (YSB) and recently became the Program Coordinator for the Mayor's Youth Employment Program (MYEP) since 2011. I am sending you my testimony to support youth service bureaus across our state.

The YSB believes that young people are economic assets to the city of Stamford. To that end, we are committed to creating youth employment programming opportunities within the city of Stamford. The support is needed now more than ever. According to the CT Dept. of Labor, youth unemployment in Fairfield County for 16-19 year olds has averaged 28.4 percent from 2010 to 2012. Andrew Sum from the Center for Labor Markets Studies at Northeast University states that employment has declined far more among teens (16-19) and young adults (20-24) than any other age group in the country. In 2011 and 2012, only 26 percent of the nation's teens help any type of paid job, the lowest annual average employment rate in the history of our country in the post-World War II era.

The YSB partnered with the Mayor's office in 2011 with 30 students and has been able to increase it to 75 students in 2013 and 2014. Youth Services Bureaus runs 4 proven programs focusing on Employment, Youth Leadership, Restorative Justice and Adventure Learning reaching over 2,677 students and with approximately 200 community collaborations in 2014. We would not be able to collaborate with our partners as effectively if we were cut in the budget.

Since 2011 (MYEP) has provided:

- 423 students corporate style interviews with feedback.
- 232 students in internships for five weeks of over the summer at \$10 an hour.
- 560 hours of work was provided over 4 years.
- 108 hours of Leadership training Soft skills Job readiness training.
- 73% of our students are minority
- 56% are eligible for free & reduced lunch

We have the support of 28 business and foundations which cover the costs of the internship salaries. If we have a 40% hit to the funding of Youth Services we would not be able to support as many students with due to the impact to our staff and programming budgets. However you don't need to listen to me, please see the attached testimony from 31 of our past participants.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lappas
Program Coordinator
The Mayor's Youth Employment Program

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Megan Connolly

At the beginning of July I would have never expected to learn skills that I now know today. I have developed tremendous skills from my internship at Starwood, and the MYEP leadership classes. At Starwood, I had an amazing experience. I learned how to act in a corporate environment. Also it's great how I learned how to present myself properly and professionally. At Starwood we got to shadow people in different fields of work, and listen to many speakers in the different divisions. What stood out to me at Starwood was that a lot of people did not major in what they are doing! This internship gave us an idea of a career path we might be interested in pursuing. We also shadowed employees to specifically learn about their jobs. I shadowed an employee within the Architecture Department, Global Citizenship Department, and the Public Relations department. This gave me a taste of different career paths than just Digital Marketing and an opportunity to see what career path I might want to pursue.

At the Leadership programs I learned things such as how to dress appropriately for the job you were going into to, how to write a resume and cover letter, how to work in a team, and how to manage our money.

I can honestly say that the MYEP program was an amazing opportunity, and I am so thankful that I was picked to be a part of it! Everyone in the program developed skills that we need to succeed in life. Skills that one cannot get from school. Being exposed to the real world, gave all of us a huge special advantage and exposure that rarely anyone our age gets. I respect the program tremendously. Every single student in the program is smart, friendly, hardworking, and special. The ability to transform all of us into "real adults" is mind-blowing to me. In less than a month of work, all of us are able to grow into more mature, confident, and professional students/employees.

Sincerely,
Megan Connolly
The Harvey School

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Anthony Kamar Flores

Hello, my name is Anthony Kamar Flores. I was a part of the Mayor's Youth Employment program over the past summer, and I found that it taught me a lot. There were a lot of responsibilities that I already didn't understand before coming into this, and this helped teach me a lot about responsibility in the work world. Because of this outstanding experience I had I am opposed to the Youth Services Bureau budget cut.

The day I was accepted into the program a very exciting and joyful one. I was sure to go into this with a good job over the summer, and with great experience.

I struggled again on the day of the opening ceremony. I ended up being late because of city bus issues that ultimately broke me down to tears. I found it to be my first failure experience, one that makes me realize the high stakes of the work force, and the high expectancy of the workers. Michelle Lappas helped me chin up again, telling me that this is all for a great learning experience, and so I pushed on again. I met with the Starwood representatives who I would work for in the summer, and gained hope that the summer could still continue to go well.

I learned to take the bus to the job each morning, developed an exact routine which was nearly never broken, and my money management skills were tested to the upper limits of their capacity. I worked for Starwood hotels and spas that summer, a very large and prestigious corporation that provides innovation and expertise in the hospitality market. Along with a group of four other students, I have created a large scale presentation that was presented to the CEO of Starwood on a marketing campaign with various elements on an almost professional level. So much was learned throughout that internship about the company, and the things that each individual person does for the company. In the corporation world, team work and communication is the key for success.

Now, almost six months after the end of the internship, Starwood has called me again for another internship that they are running. I will be with two others to pilot this internship which I believe can be a very wonderful and exciting internship to be a part of. I thank MYEP for that opportunity, and for the lessons it has taught me. I only ask that it stays a part of Stamford, and gives that opportunity to other students who may never see it.

Thank you,
Alex Flores
Western Connecticut State University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Alexander Marshall

The budget cuts are unacceptable to me. The Mayors Youth Employment Program truly helped shape me as a person throughout the summer of my Junior and Senior year, and I felt it was an amazing experience. Leadership classes allowed me to network with other aspiring high school interns, while also receiving a variety of lessons like developing a strong resume. This past summer I worked at the Starwood Hotels and Resorts corporate office in Stamford, and was able to meet multiple people in IT that have helped make my transition to Syracuse University as an Information Management and Technology Major. I also met some very good friends through the program that I am still in touch with at college. I am extremely grateful for my summers in the program and the termination of it deeply saddens me. For these reasons the Youth Services Bureau budget cuts should not go occur.

Alex Marshall,

Syracuse University, 18
Computer Brothers Of CT
Operations Manager
Tel #: 203-940-3476

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Carolyn Armas

When I finally turned 16 I was so excited to finally get job. Having to try to go out and find a job on my own was hard not knowing at this point what my interest are and what I was good at. I heard of the opportunity of the Mayors Youth Employment program through a flyer my mom and decided why not to apply for it. That must have been the best decision I have made. Right from the beginning before I was even in the program they helped me helping me through the interview process and what I could do to raise my chances in getting a job. When I did get the job I was able to work for Soundwaters that even though it wasn't my first choice it definitely opened my eyes to different responsibilities in a job. Every Friday we also had a workshop and though at first that's not how i wanted to spend my Friday mornings it ended up benefiting us and actually was alot of fun. Learning valuable presenting skills, resume building, and skills that might be needed in the workplace at a young age was definitely something that I was truly thankful for it came in handy later on in life. My second year I got to choose to work for Stamford Downtown and it was an amazing eye opening experience. I got to be in the business district and be able to actually see what i want to do as a career. Mayors youth employment has been a positive influence on me and others who have been in the program.

Carolyn Armas
UConn - Stamford

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Lina Elmansy

When I first applied for the Mayor's Youth Employment Program last year, I had no idea what to expect. However, I can honestly say it was one of the best and most educational experiences of my life. As someone who had never had a job, this program was my introduction to the workforce. It taught me about so many different skills that are necessary for future success. Between the days I spent at my job and the time I spent in weekly leadership classes, I gained so much knowledge about things that I originally knew very little about. I was exposed to the real world and learned about what it takes to succeed in any position. I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to be part of the program and hope to return again next summer.

Thank you,
Lina Elmansy
AITE

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Tyler Brandt

During my junior year of high school, there were many people that told me I should get a job during the summer before my senior year. It was good advice, but the only problem was that it's hard enough for adults to find work, let alone high school students. When I came across the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, I was just happy to find something I could do that did not involve being a camp counselor. While being a camp counselor can be a valuable experience, it is not for everyone, and I didn't enjoy camp enough to go back as a camper, much less a counselor. What I didn't know at the time was how much this program was going to help me grow and mature as a person as I developed skills to use in the workplace.

My first job was with the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, and my biggest fear was how to communicate with others in the workplace. I was worried that I wouldn't know what to say or when to say things to my boss and everyone around me. Ultimately, I just didn't want to come off as unprofessional. Luckily for me, I happened to be in the perfect setting. From attire, to behavior, to how to address others in the workplace, the MYEP walked all of its summer interns through how to be professional. As business professionals talked to us about how to deal with many different scenarios that we might face while working, I became more aware of how I wanted to handle myself throughout the internship. Also, the program paired me with a mentor from the organization I worked with so that I had someone there with whom I felt comfortable communicating with and talking to about my work. Instead of being nervous to tell my boss about the work I had completed, the MYEP and my mentor helped me get to the point where I was excited to *present* and analyze the work I had done for the organization.

In addition to getting me more comfortable with my communication skills and how to behave in a working environment, the Mayor's Youth Employment Program helped us develop useful skills that we will need throughout our careers. Instead of just giving us a working experience, the MYEP taught us about budget planning, public speaking, resume development, and much more. Learning all of these useful tools in addition to my job made me feel as though I was getting a more complete experience. Some of my friends who had jobs outside of the MYEP spent all of their first paychecks while I understood the importance of money management. As they were happily spending their money, I felt as though I was working towards something greater. The budgeting and resume development lessons from the MYEP made me feel as though I was making progress towards a better state in the future. Those skills gave me a sense of direction with this work because I had a resume to document what I had done after learning the importance of money management, I knew there would be something down the road for which I will be glad I held on to those paychecks. Now that I had my first job, the Mayor's Youth Employment Program was also teaching me how I needed to handle myself outside of the workplace. This past summer I grew a lot as a person, significantly improving my communication skills, and also learned how working impacts the rest of my life thanks to the Mayor's Youth Employment Program.

Tyler Brandt
St Luke's High School

Andrew Newman

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

The Mayor's Youth Employment Program has given me so much more than just a summer job. In the two years I spent in the program and the one that I spent helping to run it, I have learned endlessly about both myself and the wider world. All of my mentors, including Jason Steer and the tirelessly working Michelle Lappas, have helped me to develop into an adept, responsible young adult. I've learned how to do everything from nailing an interview to managing my personal finances to establishing an extensive network. I've formed friendships that I've kept to this day, I've gotten references from supervisors whom I had the privilege to work under, and I've gained invaluable leadership experience from working on summer projects that gave back to my community. And finally, I got the chance to enable other teenagers to have those experiences by assisting in the running of the program this past summer. The Mayor's Youth Employment Program is one of those things everybody in the community can be proud of- a serious program that helps cultivate young minds and nurture confidence and professionalism in our town's youth. To get rid of it would be nothing short of a travesty, and a senseless one at that. Without the program, scores of Stamford's teenagers will be denied the well-deserved chance to prove themselves and further their goals. I cannot express the extent to which I urge you to reconsider the cuts to the Youth Employment budget.

Best,

Andrew Newman
University of Wisconsin-Madison Class of 2016

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Kiara Galindo

Once again, the Mayor's Youth Employment Program has exceeded my expectations. The program is an amazing experience that, truly, helped me create a better future for myself. MYEP gave me the opportunity to make connections, build my leadership skills, offered me a job, and so much more. Through this program I was able to be in a real life work environment that opened my eyes to many possible careers. I went on ride a longs with SEMS, police department, fire marshal, and fire department. This opportunity, not many people get and it was something I never saw myself doing, but because of MYEP I was able to go through this experience. Now I have a better understanding of these jobs and saw first-hand how much of their time and effort they put into these jobs. This program has formed me into a responsible, hardworking person and I am thankful and grateful this program exists for us, young adults. And through this program I've learned you have to take risks and accept change. Mayor's Youth Employment Program is a blessing. I recommend this program to every rising senior or graduated senior who is willing to work hard and wants a bright, successful future.

Thank you,
Kiara Galindo
University of Bridgeport

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Alex Barriga

It provided to me an opportunity that I do not feel like I could have gotten anywhere else. I never could have imagined that I could have got an internship at large companies such as Starwood and Deloitte. It was invaluable because no one in my life could share their experience of working in an environment like those. The other aspect of the program, the Friday leadership classes, were also important because of the people that came to give us advice, which included public speaking skills and appropriate conduct in a professional environment. Personally, the advice was much appreciated because other than then I had not been given much guidance in several of the subjects that the speakers went over. I hope that the budget for this program is not cut because I feel like it would be a real loss for many youths in the community. For many people programs such as this are one of the only ways to truly prepare themselves for what is to come in the future.

Thanks,
Alex Barriga
University of Connecticut

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Paulomi Rao

To say experience is a teacher, is an understatement. For many high school students including myself, experience is everything—the pocket cash jiggling in our wallets, the visionary perspectives in our heads, and the motivation and concentration to one day go out into the American workforce and contribute one budget transfer at a time in the Office of Policy and Management. To me, my summer at the City of Stamford Government Center was enjoyable, surprisingly interesting and a teacher's lesson of all time.

In a farm of budgeting, I metaphorically walked in on my first day as nothing more than an ear of corn. Like the corn, I would one day grow many kernels of my own but until then, I needed fertile soil, water and sun to help me develop. The Office of Policy and Management's staff did exactly that and ironically became the nutrients in the soil, providing me with real-life "work experience." Technically, my Access and Excel skills tripled and I cultivated more about Microsoft Office applications within the first week than I had ever learned. The overall workplace skills I experienced through completing the entire process of budget transfers taught more than the few thousands of dollars I transferred ever could. From the straightforward job of highlighting deficits to the more challenging steps of actually finding money to cover them, I became familiar with proper workplace etiquette and how mistakes really do cost a lot of time and paper. Even the banal work of helping to reconfigure the city's cellphones and contact centers taught me valuable lessons in communication and speaking: true characteristics of one's responsibility and accountability. Other times, when I helped to design the City's Budget Book Cover, I was able to see a project from start to finish, a valuable experience as a sixteen year old high school student—a symbol of hard work and a memory of dedication that will never vanish through all my future jobs. Unknowingly, my work at a table in the corner evolved from a five week summer internship to a complete work-opportunity.

Paulo Coelho once said, "Be brave. Take risks. Nothing can substitute experience." And although I didn't do anything too risky this summer (there wasn't any bungee jumping off the Government Center as far as I'm concerned) I ended up taking the biggest risk of my life for my future. A risk that I know will one day propel me into my job or career that I truly enjoy and finally, a risk that was only created because of the opportunities that the Mayors Youth Employment Program forged for myself and others.

Thanks,
Paulomi Rao
Stamford High School

Jennifer Midy

My name is Jennifer Midy. I joined the Mayors Youth Employment Program to gain work experience. Throughout the program I gained more than that.

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

- I made new friends that I still speak to now, even though the program is not currently going on.
- I made connections at the internship location I was sent to. Those connections are there when I need advice regarding possible career choices and college searching.
- I learned about creating a bank account and responsibly saving my money. (I now have a bank account and know how to use it!)
- I learned how to confidently speak in front of others and why it is important. The tone of voice was not the only part of public speaking that was learned. I also learned how to walk in front of the audience while speaking in order to look confident. I learned how to create visual representations when giving a public speech to enhance the effect of whatever it is that is being presented. The visual representation included a power point. (I can take these lessons with me into college!)
- I learned how a job must be treated as a high school or college education. (I must be on time and work just as hard, if not harder because I am getting paid to be there.)
- I learned what must be done to do well at a job. I cannot simply do what I am told; I have to work above and beyond the bosses expectations.
- I learned the attitude I must carry with me to be successful in life. Sometimes that is all a teen really needs and is what's keeping them from really excelling in life. One's attitude is more important than I thought before the MYEP impacted my way of thinking.
- I learned that it is not easy to find a job out there. Internships help people find jobs though, because the business or company may end up keeping the student longer than planned.
- I learned how to be work well with groups of people because certain jobs desire that out of their employees.
- The MYEP gave me a taste of how my life will be after graduating from college. Some people really need that wakeup call! I know I did!

Sincerely,
Jennifer Midy
Stamford High School

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Gabrielle Rerra,

The Mayor's Youth Employment Program helped me grow as a person and as a citizen of our city. The internship allowed me to work with professionals in the arts community and get hands on experience. Through my internship, I developed better organizational, communication and leadership skills. More importantly, the Mayor's Youth Employment Program taught me the value of a strong work ethic and how to contribute well to a project or task. This program gave me invaluable experiences and I will take the lessons learned in the Mayor's Youth Employment Program into the future.

Thank you,
Gabby Rerra
Northfield Mount Hermon

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Wendy Petition

I joined the Mayor's Youth Employment Program during the summer of my junior year. For two years I was a part of this program and I'm completely grateful I was able to participate in it. The Mayor's Youth helped me advance in the work force while also allowing me to push certain limits I wouldn't have on my own. It would be a shame if this program does not continue for another year. Not for me because I have already completed my two years but for the rest of the youth in Stamford who aren't yet and may not ever be educated in the rules of the work force. Rules that everyone should be aware of in order to have a successful future. I really hope you change your decision of the budget cuts, this program helps build a strong foundation for the future of the City of Stamford.

Sincerely,
Wendy Petition
Quinnipiac University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Christina Peltrop

The MYEP did the following for me:

- Prepared me for college
- Helped me create higher expectations for myself
- Prepared me for the real world job experience
- Allowed for massive Networking

Best,
Christina Peltrop
Central Connecticut State University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Erin K. Manning

I am writing to express my support of Stamford's Mayor's Youth Employment Program (MYEP) and other youth services' programs in both Stamford and around the state. MYEP truly was a life changing experience for me. The program provides students from all parts of Stamford with employment opportunities that would not be available outside of this program. The corporate and non-profit partnerships that the program offers, gives students a new view into the job market and teaches skills that most students would not get while in high school.

My experience with MYEP is very unique and definitely allowed me to stand out during the college process. While participating in the program, I interned with both a non-profit, The Volunteer Center, and in a large corporate setting as part of the innovative partnership with Starwood Hotels and Resorts. These types of corporate partnerships shed a positive light on Stamford as a city, but more importantly on the youth of this city and what we have to offer. Additionally, I was afforded the opportunity to return to the program the past summer as a program assistant to help support the program coordinators and students on a more administrative level. This experience gave me a look into the other programming of the Youth Services Bureau. Having experienced MYEP from both sides, I understand the important work that it does for Stamford's students – individuals who will in a matter of years be entering the job force and taking a more active political and economic role in the city and state.

This program provided me with the necessary job training and leadership skills to make a valuable impact within my campus community at Northwestern University. My training has made me a more confident leader, student and worker and provided me with numerous skills that I would not have gained if I had worked a different summer job. For many Stamford students, myself included, not having a summer job is not an option. However, programs like the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, not only give students a job, but also help prepare them for the workforce with opportunities that most high school students do not receive.

Being a part of this program allowed me to learn more about my city and working for it allowed me to give back to it. I am incredibly thankful to be a graduate of the Mayor's Youth Employment Program. I urge you to continue to support this program and others like it to as the MYEP slogan says, "Inspire tomorrow, today".

Best,
Erin K. Manning
Northeastern University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Jon Berman

As a recently graduated high school senior about to begin studying engineering at Carnegie Mellon University, I had very little work experience that related to my field of interest. I knew that I enjoyed math and science, but I did not know what an engineering job truly entailed. I knew that if I wanted to maintain a competitive edge going into college, I needed to gain some kind of relevant work experience. This was my state of mind going into the Mayor's Youth Employment Program.

After working in the City of Stamford's Engineering Department through the program, I learned much more than just engineering. I learned more than how engineers apply concepts of math, science, and engineering to real world problems. I also learned how to work in a professional setting, how to lead a team attempting to achieve a common goal, and how to effectively communicate with my colleagues and coworkers who were more experienced than I was. While the internship focused on civil engineering, and I now study chemical engineering, I certainly attribute my professional success to the skills I began to develop at the Mayor's Youth Employment Program. I sincerely hope that the Mayor's Youth Employment Program can continue to change the professional lives and the careers of the students of Stamford as it changed mine.

Sincerely,
Jon Berman
Carnegie Mellon University
B.S. Chemical Engineering, 2016

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Giselle Lemus

Through the Mayor's Youth Employment program, I got a taste of the real world and it helped me grow so much as an individual. I woke up excited for work every day and the leadership workshops were so helpful, the tips I learned are still of use to me today and have even helped those close to me. I highly recommend this program to high school students as it greatly exposes them to the work environment and teaches them not only about the outside world but of their own capabilities as well.

Sincerely,
Giselle Lemus
University of New Haven

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Jazmine Mayo

The Mayor's Youth Employment Program has had a huge impact on my life. Not only did it create the opportunity for me to have an internship as a high school student, it also helped me grow as a person. Through the Youth Employment Program I learned so much about myself, my goals, and how to go about achieving them. I learned how to build a professional resume, how to successfully get through an interview, and how to stay motivated to reach success. Before the program I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Should I go to college or should I work full-time? I took a few high school business courses and decided that if I went to college I would major in business. Yet, I had little knowledge about the 'business world'. However, after having an internship at Starwood Hotels & Resorts I learned so much more, and knew then that I enjoyed the aspect of helping people more than the idea of owning a business. Eager to find a helping profession, my second internship at the Women's Mentoring Center helped to guide me along the way. After counseling families, mentoring women, and learning about poverty I decided that I would be a social worker. If I never had this experience through the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, I wouldn't have the advantage of knowing specifically what I wanted to do in life. I wouldn't know about scholarships, networking, or any useful skills deemed necessary to the working world. As a college freshman, I can honestly say that the Youth Employment Program has helped me get this far and I'm extremely grateful for the experience!

Thank You,
Jazmine Mayo
Southern Connecticut University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Mother of Jason

My son Jason worked 2 summers under Mayor Pavia's Youth Employment program. The 1st year, he worked for a construction company that includes Hotel Zero. He learned to do office work, marketing, hotel management and worked on construction crews. It was a good start to expose him to running a multifaceted business. The 2nd year, he was brilliantly matched to being an Intern at The City of Stamford, under the watch of Mayor Pavia, Ted and Chris Munger, special assistant to Mayor Pavia. Jason was introduced to each member of the Police and Fire Departments, and worked on disaster preparedness and security policies for his hometown. He is now a member of the US Army, training at Fort Benning, GA, training to defend our country. He scored 100% in his "red zone" courses, which he was acknowledged by his Commander for his achievement. If it wasn't for his mentoring by the places he interned at, he may not have chosen to take the career path he is currently on and certainly would not understand how to achieve the success and determination he is exhibiting, if it wasn't for his placement via the Stamford Youth Employment program. Jason, being born like Gov. Malloy with Learning Differences, only further confirms "the sky is the limit" chance that will be denied student's coming after Jason having LD or not, in not being able to be have the opportunities our kids were given to be a part of this program. Like Mayor Pavia said to us parents, this program gives students a chance to grow and put a few dollars in their pocket. Certainly paying \$10 an hour for these experiences, is only a drop in the budget bucket for Hartford to continue to fund.

Sincerely,

Michelle Kola-Sichler

Stamford Youth Services Bureau

Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

Connecticut Legislature Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services* March 3, 2015

Daniella Exantus

I am Daniella Exantus and I was a former member of the MYEP. This program has positively affected my life and has put my future in the right path. I know that this program helps young people learn the correct skills to make it in future careers as well as give teens exposure to very helpful summer internships. My first year in the program, I was given the amazing opportunity to work at The Smith House Nursing Home. I was able to learn so many important things about the world of medicine and most importantly the importance of healing people. I was able to accompany Registered Nurses and Medical Doctors during checkups with the elderly residents of the nursing home. My summer at the Smith House Nursing Home was so impactful that I eventually changed my idea of becoming a Chiropractor to following the path to become a Medical Doctor. At the mere age of 16, I was given more insight on the world of healthcare than most teenagers my age.

During my second year at the amazing MYEP, I was blessed with the great opportunity to work at the City of Stamford Department of Health and Social Services. That summer in 2013, I was able to focus on the underserved community of Stamford. This department's mission was to maximize the physical health in Stamford's diverse population by connecting people to the sources they needed. The clinic provided: free glucose and cholesterol screenings, blood pressure readings, referrals to dental and medical clinics, information on affordable health and insurance. The mobile clinic would operate once a week and it would travel to the south end of Stamford, which mainly comprised of mainly impoverished minorities with little information in how to maintain a healthy life. I was fortunate enough to be a part of the mobile clinic, handing out helpful pamphlets focusing on disease prevention.

The MYEP has given me so much preparation and skills that I would not have been able to learn anywhere else. The Youth Services of Stamford is important for a reason that reaches far beyond money. The simple truth is that the MYEP is not only a simple summer job but also a way for the youth of Stamford can avoid a life of violence and crime. Cutting the MYEP means that you are adding to the problem of crime and violence that is affecting teens in the City of Stamford. The past 8 years show that the economy is still vulnerable which means that there are fewer jobs for young people who need to make an honest paycheck and stay away from illegal acts and in the meanwhile learn skills that will stay with them forever.

I am a prime example of a young minority who was positively affected by the MYEP. Due to the amazing skills and opportunities that I gained at the MYEP, I am now a sophomore at the University of CT with a major in Biology on my journey to become a Medical Doctor. Along with that, I have just been accepted to University of Columbia's Summer Medical Enrichment Program where I will be getting clinical experience at the New York Presbyterian Hospital as well as get preparation for the MCAT. This prestigious and competitive program would not have even been possible if I never had the MYEP in my life.

Thank You for Your Time,
Daniella Lydie Exantus
UCONN Storrs

Vivian Levine

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

I have spent my entire life in Stamford Connecticut. I attended Stamford schools through kindergarten until I graduated from Stamford high schools do after College I married and lived here. I began teaching school and did so for 40 years. My three children did the same schooling. Some of them are now living here as well as working with the school system. My husband's mom taught here as well so we have 3 generations of teachers with Stamford schools.

My granddaughter, Megan Connolly had a fabulous experience working at Starwood with your summer program. We were amazed to see the self-confidence grow and pride she took in the work place. I am sure the hundreds of kids you placed will always keep this program deep in their hearts.

How dare the state cut this program? We are one of the few towns that don't have a teen center so this is a great alternative. The city that works. What a joke!!! Who does it work for if you can't give the future generations programs such as this?

My good friend Dan Malloy whose nieces and nephews worked with me in the gifted program that was also cut!!! How shameful that we cannot support our wonderful youth in and out of the school. System. I am appalled!!!

Please tell me what I can do to help.

Thank you,
Vivian Levine

Stamford Youth Services Bureau

Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

Connecticut Legislature Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services* *March 3, 2015*

John Grosso

I am writing to you to not only to convey my displeasure at the potential cuts to the State Youth budget, but also to share with you my experience with our Youth Services department here in Stamford.

My name is John Grosso, and I am the Social Media Leader of the Diocese of Bridgeport. I got my start during the first year of the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, almost four years ago. The program was my first real job, and it opened up more doors for me than I could have possibly imagined.

I owe everything in my newfound career to the Mayor's Youth Employment Program. In fact, I would not be where I am today, in an amazing career, without it. The program itself was wonderfully run, and I was placed in an incredible department. It allowed me to make money, crucial in paying back my loans, and to build my resume. The most important thing though, is that it allowed me to meet some incredible people, many of which I still visit today, they are my mentors, but also my friends.

This experience was instrumental in my life, and it is no exaggeration that I do not know where I would be without it. I know there are many who feel the same way as I do. The MYEP was one of the best things I ever did- and I have heard the same thing from people that were a part of other Youth Services programs.

In our modern era, with our difficult economy and hyper competitive society, we must do everything we can do help our youth and young adults. We need to nurture and help our citizens get ahead in life. Cutting programs that have to do with youth are counterproductive to government, especially when they empower our youth to achieve and contribute to society. We as a society are obligated to do everything in our power to make this world a better place for the generation behind us. Cutting youth programs flies in the face of this obligation, but ultimately it denies young adults resources that might otherwise keep them out of trouble. Helping youth is one of those no brainer political issues that we can all get behind.

I am lucky, because I was able to build a solid foundation for my career and myself through the MYEP. If you cut the Youth budget, you are cutting amazing programs like this. You are cutting the very best of our government.

I trust you will make the right decision for the youth and young adults of Connecticut.

Respectfully yours,

John Grosso

Megan D'alessandro

I can truly say that one of the best experiences of my life was participating in the Mayor's Youth Employment Program in Stamford, CT. It taught me what the real world would be like, and allowed me to gain internship experience at a young age. I am currently an accounting major at the University of

888 Washington Boulevard Stamford, Connecticut 06901 203.977.4643

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Connecticut in Storrs, CT. As an accounting major, you can normally gain an internship position at a Big Four accounting firm the summer of your junior year. I am currently a sophomore, and have an internship at Deloitte for this upcoming summer. The Mayor's Youth Employment program was a key step in my ability to gain this internship at Deloitte, and really gave me the professional edge I needed. It allowed me to have a multitude to talk about regarding past employment experience during the interview process, and showed the interviewers that I would be able to help their company, even though I am a year younger than the generally accepted age of accounting interns.

This program is essential to helping the city's youth mature and become ready to make a positive impact in the future. The work that Michelle Lappas and Jason Steer put into this program goes above and beyond everyone's expectations. They truly care about each and every participant and will go out of their way to help participants in any way possible. The knowledge that the youth acquires through this program, and through spending time with Michelle and Jason, surpasses the knowledge that can be acquired in the classroom. It is a privilege to be a part of this program, and helps breed successful candidates for future employment in Stamford, CT. Getting out into the real world and learning from your mistakes is one of the most valuable gifts that a member of the city's youth can receive. As a past participant, it would be devastating to see this program get cut from the city's budget. I wish every member of Stamford's youth could experience participating in the Mayor's Youth Employment Program.

Megan D'alessandro

UCONN - Storrs

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Lara Agatstein

To be given the opportunity to be a part of the Youth Employment Program changed my life in a great way for my future. Going into the Program, I had no prior experience out in the working world. I did not know what to expect nor how to act, or stand up for myself being a young adult. The program provided a job for me that I wouldn't have had the confidence to go out and find myself. I received my first paycheck with more enthusiasm and confidence that I ever had in my life thus far. The activities that I did with my peers such as the rope course in Scalzi park, working at a barbeque fest, mindfulness activities, and listening to speakers during that time infused my brain with knowledge I could not of received anywhere else. After graduating the program, I can proudly say I got my first full time job in the career choice I wanted. I became a full time Makeup Artist in our local Lord and Taylor, a job I never thought I could get.

The amount of support given to me being in the program was so important especially for a teenager. Looking back if I wasn't a part of the program I would have been hanging out with friends, doing things I was not supposed to be doing and probably even getting in trouble. But instead I received my first paycheck, my first completed resume, and a job to put on my resume, as well as continuing support for after graduating the program. It created a wonderful bottom layer to a great future ahead.

I was and still am honored to be a part of the Mayors Youth Employment Program.

Lara Agatstein
M.U.D.D.

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Rebecca Schechter

To whomever it may concern,

The Youth Employment Program was the reason I was able to find a job anywhere else. It was my first job, something to put on my resume. Without the youth employment program I would not have the work experience needed to attain an internship in college. Every high school student should be able to experience the impactful leadership classes MYEP provided me and my peers. I was able to work on a technical project with my peers that required us to work together to create a representation of the highlights of living in Stamford. In those few weeks I was able to expand my computer skills and use software I never used before to create a beautiful video edited by our group. The following summer, my team and I created MYEP's very own website. We worked very hard and learned so much in so little time. It is for these reasons that this budget is so important. Our youth should be our biggest invest, they are the future after all.

Thank you Michelle and Jason for fighting for us. You have made a huge impact on many people and have helped them tremendously.

All the best,
Rebecca Schechter
Pace University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Katherine Grosso [kat.grosso@gmail.com]

The Mayor's Youth Employment program was instrumental in getting my feet wet in the workplace. Without the mentoring and guidance I received during this program I would have been deprived of the opportunity to grow and gain as much confidence as I did in only one summer. I am very thankful for the opportunity the MYEP gave me and wouldn't be where I am now without it.

Katherine Grosso
Fairfield University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Gustavo Torrealba

The Mayor's Youth Employment program gave me and many of my peers an opportunity to gain invaluable experience in real world environments, better preparing us for future challenges and helping us decide whether or not the type of environment our internships put us in was the right one. I interned as an assistant engineer at the government center, and having gone through the program I came out with a greater sense of understanding of how a city's engineering bureau operates, which helped me define what type of career choices I would like to make in the future. Not only does the MYEP provide these experiences for young students, it also puts them ahead of the competition by giving them challenges to face and overcome early on in their education (most students don't start looking for internships until their college years). Aside from my internship experience, the leadership courses were great in helping me understand what makes a leader, while allowing me to interact and network with other ambitious young adults looking to get ahead and make the most out of their summers.

Gustavo Torrealba
UCONN Storrs

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Morgan Cappetta

I am currently a Sophomore studying in Boston University's School of Management. I credit the Mayor's Youth Employment Program with dramatically accelerated my professional growth. As a 16 and 17 year old I was given a great deal of responsibility in my internship positions and my team projects within the MYEP workshops. I was exposed to the real world: real problems businesses face, and real goals they hope to achieve. I helped solve these problems and achieve these goals. Without the opportunity to gain these invaluable experiences, I believe I would not feel as professionally confident and prepared as I apply for even more internships and high-level roles relevant to my majors. Seeing the MYEP disappear would be extremely detrimental to the community of high schoolers in Stamford who do not yet know what they can achieve.

Morgan Cappetta

Boston University

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Dear Michelle,

I am writing to thank you so very much for all that you--and the Youth Services department--have done for me.

My internship with Mayor Pavia two summers ago has provided me with the interpersonal and office-systems skills which have left an indelible impact upon my career trajectory and personal goals.

Without this program--and more importantly the summer internship--I never would have realized that a career in government--in the heart of city government in the 10th floor Mayor's Office--would be right for me. Because of the MYEP, I have cemented my aspirations of becoming a criminal attorney. I am continuing to pursue this path in my sophomore year at NYU--majoring in Politics--and can't thank you enough for the irrevocable impression that your program has left on me.

It would be an insurmountable disservice to the youth of Stamford for this program--especially the summer iteration--to be cut. I greatly hope that other kids will have the future opportunity to really apply their dreams to a real-life internship and, in doing so, to take the first step in achieving those aspirations.

Thank you once again.

Kindest regards,

Nikita Roach

New York University

nr1188@nyu.edu

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Mackenzie Eisen

I had known throughout senior year that the only thing I wanted to do that coming summer was participate in the Mayor's Youth Employment Program. I spent months in anticipation, eagerly checking the website to find out when the applications had been posted to make sure I would be one of the first to apply. It seemed like an incredible opportunity, to have the chance right out of high school to gain job and life skills, build networking relationships, and be employed. Finally, I would be able to escape the long summers of camp counseling that I had become accustomed to. So when I was accepted into the program I was absolutely ecstatic. And ecstatic I remained, until I learned that I would be working at SoundWaters. As a camp counselor. My disappointment was bolstered on my first day when, upon introducing myself to my co-workers, I was promptly handed a petri-dish full of tiny severed fish heads. This was not what I believed I had signed up for. If you had told me that morning that the weeks that would follow would turn out to be the best summer of my life, I would have been in total disbelief. But it's true. I absolutely loved my experience at SoundWaters and wouldn't have traded it for any other job. As much as I enjoyed the Friday morning sessions with the rest of the Mayor's Youth Program, I was actually disappointed not to be at work. I absolutely grew and changed as a person this summer from this experience. I learned to always keep an open mind. By the last day I was cutting the fish heads myself! I really want to thank Mayor's Youth for placing me in the last place I would have put myself and forcing me to adapt and be flexible. SoundWaters asked me to remain on their staff once MYEP concluded and I now have a place to work next summer as well. Working on the group projects was also a learning experience for me. I'm very fortunate to have been assigned to the Marcus for Change group, as it allowed me to learn about an entire portion of the Stamford community that I knew nothing about. I was able to apply my own skills from journalism and other pursuits and work collaboratively with others to help promote a very worthy cause. The only downside of this experience was that the majority of our group did not contribute to the project at all. Rather, about four of us had to pick up the slack for everyone else, as many other group members did not come to our meetings or actually acted in a manner that was detrimental to the success of the group. Our project could have been improved greatly if we had all collaborated more effectively. Overall I am extremely grateful to have been selected for the Mayor's Youth Employment Program. It was an experience that I will always remember fondly.

Mackenzie Eisen
George Washington University

Stamford Youth Services Bureau

Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement *Testimony Against the*
Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Kevin Alarcon

My name is Kevin Alarcon and I'm currently a freshman at the University of Connecticut. I am writing to oppose the Youth Service Bureau budget cuts as proposed by the Governor. I was part of Stamford Mayor's Youth Employment Program for the past two years. The Mayor's Youth Employment Program has provided me with the opportunity to gain hands on work experience that you do not gain in a classroom. It has also given me an edge in the job market because employers are usually more interested in someone with experience than their qualifications. Also, working for two different companies has broadened my network immensely. I plan to use these connections in the near future to hopefully transition into one of these companies. This program has taught me great skills such as strong work ethic, communication skills and team work skills. Not only that but it has changed my career path. After working for the Stamford Federal Credit Union last summer I decided that accounting was not for me. I have since changed my major to Digital Marketing.

I have kept in touch with many members from Starwood Hotels and Resorts when I worked there in 2013. I am currently in the process of interviewing for another summer internship position in Digital Marketing with Starwood. I have learned how important it is to network and keep in touch with my mentors and employees who I have had the pleasure of working with.

The Mayors Youth Employment Program was a very beneficial program for me and approximately 50 other students. With that said if the budget is cut then the students who are currently in the position I was in two years ago won't be able to get the same opportunities that were given to me through the Youth Services Bureau. I will always remember my experience with the Mayors Youth Program as being a life changing experience that has prepared me for the future. Please do not cut the budget that way the Youth Services Bureau can continue to serve our local community students in programs like MYEP.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kevin Alarcon
UConn Stamford