

Testimony for March 3, 5 p.m. for the Appropriations Secondary Education Sub-committee

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

My name is Tom Donaldson, I am the Director of the Torrington Area Youth Service Bureau, which serves the towns of Torrington, Burlington, Harwinton, with some programs which serve all of Litchfield County. We are strongly urging this body to reverse the massive cuts to Youth Service Bureaus in the newly proposed 2 year budget plan submitted by Governor Malloy on February 18, 2015.

For the past 29 years, the Torrington Youth Service Bureau has served thousands of children and youth in Torrington, Harwinton, Burlington and surrounding towns. Programs like Youth Employment, the Juvenile Review Board, in-school positive youth development groups, after school programs, mentoring, life skills classes and holiday giving are vital to meeting critical needs in our community. Although youth service bureaus do not solely exist on state funding, the level of cuts that are being proposed will greatly reduce the number of individuals we can serve as program offerings will need to be cut in accordance with the new budget.

Mandated by the state in 1978, Public Act 78-183 of the Connecticut General Statutes, youth service bureaus were created for the purpose of "evaluating, planning, coordinating and implementing services, including prevention and intervention programs for delinquent, pre-delinquent, pregnant, young parents and troubled youth." I strongly urge the state of CT and its legislators to stand by youth service bureaus and maintain their current levels of funding. Youth Service Bureaus are so much more cost effective than expensive, private institutions. We cannot afford to lose these small agencies that do not have the loudest voice in Hartford, but that provide so much help and hope to struggling families here in the Torrington area.

When sharing the news of these cuts with clients and other providers, we have heard from many how devastating to the community's well-being such a decrease would incur. Here are two examples of how the community views our work, the first is from a parent and the second from a school social worker.

To whom it may concern:

I am a mother of 5 kids and a wife of 19 years to my hubby..we are a honest,blue collar,hardworking family!My husband laid off for a year,struggle with being considered at poverty level now.I had to this letter due to the devastating news I just received..that budget cuts are being considered to our local Torrington Youth Service Bureau...the mainstay of Torrington for our local youths and families,my family especially for the last 15 years! The agency and providers are extended family to us and HUNDREDS of other family's! Whom rely and depend on TYSB during Thanksgiving for the food baskets,Christmas for the toy donations and food...because our little incomes have to provide a place to live,paying the bills,medical care,food!There is NOTHING LEFT OVER to buy presents or the special holiday trimmings! And it sucks..that we cannot buy it for our own kids!! During the summer my kids work for the Work Program...and are able to earn a income to put toward their future education,or buy special

clothing,shoes,that we cannot afford to buy...or even buy a new cd that they wanted! They have counseled by oldest son and daughter when they were doing drugs and drinking at 16 years of age...help to direct them in a better path,through talking,listening,giving our family support.They do everything under the sun.....they help educate the kids at the school,help provide outreach,information and education..by doing talk groups at the school,kids of all ages,bring the community together to make changes where it's need. Give information to the family..connect them to other program. We are blessed to have the TYSB here and if budget cuts are made ..it will make life for the families,community so much more difficult...we already struggle.Support in keeping kid,family,and community strong...by keeping TYSB.. by not making budget cuts here. Godbless from our family to yours...

Sandra and Scott
Phair & family

February 27, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Claire Pepper and I am a Social Worker in the Torrington Public School System. I have worked with the staff at the Torrington Youth Service Bureau for over 25 years and I can't say enough about the agency. I utilize the services on a weekly basis to assist me in my work here at East School. The staff provides group and individual counseling for my most at risk students. I don't know what I would do without the help I receive from the Youth Service Bureau.

During the Christmas season the agency assists my student s and families with gifts and food for the holidays. The families I work with speak very highly of the agency and the work they do in our community. Many of my children would have gone without Christmas this year and in years past if it weren't for the efforts of this outstanding agency.

In the summer the agency provides jobs for students in the Torrington community. This wonderful program keeps our children busy and out of the Juvenile Court system. Prevention programs and activities are the only way to save our state money in the future by keeping our children and teenagers safely engaged in our community.

I urge you to think about the future of our state before making any cuts to programs that service our children and teenagers. They 're the people who will be taking care of us as we grow old and we want them to be stable, educated, and productive members of society. The programs offered by the Youth Service Bureau support that mission. I ask that you don't make cuts to this agency, but instead find a way to support them even more monetarily. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Claire Pepper, MSW
School Social Worker
860-489-2303 x1524

Thank you for your support and consideration on this issue. If we can provide you with any further information, feel free to contact our office.

Sincerely,

Tom

Tom Donaldson

Director

Torrington Area Youth Service Bureau, Inc.

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