

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee

regarding **H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017,
AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**

Submitted by Linda Obedzinski, 66 Uconn Ave., Glastonbury, CT 06033

March 2, 2015

I am writing to request that you restore the funds cut from Youth Service Bureaus and library services in Governor Malloy's proposed budget. These organizations are valued parts of our communities, and must continue to perform their vital functions.

Youth Service Bureaus

My family has had significant involvement with Glastonbury Youth and Family Services (GYFS). My daughter, Katherine Obedzinski, now a high school junior, has participated in the GYFS Creative Experiences program, the Youth Services Action Group (YSAG), and other after-school programs. She has gained poise, public speaking experience and leadership skills from her participation while organizing community service activities in YSAG. Performing in the Creative Experiences musical theater productions has given her a way to express her artistic side. For some students, these shows provide a surrogate family, a place to grow, to safely take risks, and to be accepted as you are. Every adolescent needs such a place, but not all find it at home. Youth Service Bureaus step in and provide this, helping the most vulnerable of teens.

The counseling offered at GYFS has been lifesaving to many in our community. The fact that it's offered at a sliding payment scale means for some families it's the ONLY counseling they can afford. Budget cuts could make it difficult or even impossible for that needed mental health service to remain affordable to all residents. Please don't let that happen. Think of the teen who's cutting herself because she can't cope with her emotional pain, or the couple fighting to save their marriage and preserve a two-parent household for their young children. They need counseling, but their health insurance may charge more than they can manage to pay. GYFS is there to meet the need, and they do a superb job.

Study after study about risky adolescent behavior finds that the hours between the end of school and dinner time are the most dangerous. With little to do, teens may experiment with alcohol, drugs or sex. GYFS provides worthwhile after-school programs, teaching teens about stress management, television production, community service, and the creative arts. These activities have undoubtedly prevented many teens from making destructive decisions – ones that would have costly consequences not only in their own lives but also for our community as a whole.

Please restore funding to Youth Service Bureaus. Their impact is long-lasting and worthy of our financial support.

Library Services

I am similarly concerned about the proposed elimination of ConnectiCARD (reimbursement for loaning materials to patrons from other towns) and the Connecticut Library Consortium. ConnectiCARD makes the sharing of books and other circulating materials more financially equitable. Each town's library has a different collection, and it's valuable for state residents to be able to borrow from libraries in other towns. Without reimbursement, libraries with larger resources might choose not to share with patrons of smaller libraries. That would be more than unfortunate, as library resources facilitate education, job hunting, and research that helps local businesses grow.

Currently, the state provides 64% of the funding for the Connecticut Library Consortium, so the proposed cuts would have a drastic impact. This organization strengthens our libraries and negotiates group discounts on library supplies and materials. Cutting this funding would be short-sighted. Over the past few years, many town libraries have been asked to "do more with less," and the savings provided through the consortium helped with those challenging circumstances. If CLC funding is eliminated, then any future state support would first require legislation to be passed – a process that takes more time and energy.

Libraries are fundamental to our communities. Please do NOT cut funding for their valuable services.