

**Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Health On the DMHAS Budget
H.B. 6824, the Governor's Proposed Biennial Budget
An act concerning the state budget for biennium ending June 30, 2017, and making
appropriations therefore and other provisions related to revenue.**

**By Roland Harmon Director of Program Planning and Development
The Governor's Partnership to Protect Connecticut's Workforce
DBA The Governor's Prevention Partnership
March 6, 2015**

My name is Roland Harmon, Director of Program Planning and Development with 5 years of experience in assisting youth mentoring programs. On behalf of The Governor's Prevention Partnership, I am pleased and humbled to submit this testimony in support of resources for youth mentoring--a proven prevention and intervention strategy to help young people navigate the road to success. I am pleased to join you today to voice my strong support for prevention through the lens of youth mentoring, and share just a glimpse of the tremendous impact mentoring has had on our state.

The Governor's Prevention Partnership has served kids in Connecticut for the past 25 years with prevention programs that focus on mentoring, substance abuse, and bullying and violence prevention. We are the state's leading advocate and resource for youth mentoring programs, delivering the research, policy recommendations, advocacy and practical data collection tools that facilitate the expansion of mentoring initiatives.

The Partnership works deep in communities throughout CT to serve more than 150 mentoring programs, connecting young people who want and need caring adults in their lives. The goal: to help them realize the true power of mentoring. The Partnership has built a sustainable infrastructure that enables mentoring programs to flourish, all while leveraging resources to provide tools that local programs need to operate high-quality mentoring in three arenas: schools, communities and the juvenile justice system. We build greater awareness of the need for mentors, and raise the profile of mentoring among corporate leaders, foundation executives, policymakers and researchers.

During a Black History Month celebration in New Haven, I had the opportunity to hear first-hand from three young males who illustrated the value of having a mentor in their lives:

Thomas told me, "If it weren't for my experience with my mentor, I would have never had the opportunity to volunteer as a tutor in an afterschool program as a high school student."



Gionni told me, “I’m much more responsible now, I get better grades in school, I’m staying out of trouble, I now have my driver’s license and I purchased my first car.”

Elisha told me, “I used to be so angry because I could not go back with my mom, I was in foster care, and getting connected with my mentor helped me open up, be more calm, and handle things much better. My mentor helped me no longer be mad at my mother and I’m doing much better. I work part-time as a youth counselor and I’m looking at colleges.”

In essence, we believe that, with the help and guidance of an adult mentor, each young person in CT unlocks his or her potential. All across CT we have hosted regional roundtable mentoring forums and never before have young people expressed such an overwhelming interest in being connected to a caring adult role model – a mentor. We should embrace this commitment by restoring \$430K to The Partnership’s budget to continue and sustain efforts to implement services that facilitate positive youth outcomes through quality-based mentoring.

Right now, The Partnership is currently leading the state’s first Quality Mentoring System that evaluates programs on their implementation of quality mentoring standards. With guidance from national researchers and mentoring experts, 20 programs will be served this year impacting well over 7,500 young people and their mentors. In addition, we are the facilitator of the Juvenile Justice Mentoring Network serving 225 youth involved in juvenile justice through 11 quality-based local mentoring programs. And lastly, we continue to coordinate two urban mentoring networks in Hartford and Bridgeport that include 35 programs serving approximately 8,500 mentees.

I’ve also been encouraged by local mentoring program directors and coordinators and their support of our work. Some of the conversations I’ve had went like this:

“After today’s training, I’m going to start looking at mentor/mentee evaluations, tracking the length of the mentoring relationship, including social and cultural factors” This was from a program director in Rockville.

A community-based Executive Director from New Haven stated - “We are committed to providing mentors for those kids who need it most. Our connection to The Partnership and its resources extend the value we are able to provide to parents and educators in our community.”



And yet, another YMCA, CEO from Hartford commented that - “Many families may not be aware of the mentoring services available to them. It takes time to build the trust of the families and convince them that mentoring will benefit their children. Mentoring programs need to be connected and visible in the community and The Partnership is helping us get there with tools like the Effective Practice for Mentoring toolkit.”

Like any youth-development strategy, mentoring works best when measures are taken to ensure quality and effectiveness. Money, personnel and resources are required to initiate and support quality mentoring relationships. The average per-child expenditure for a mentoring match that adheres to mentoring quality standards is between \$1,500 and \$2,500 per year, depending on the program model. We can't do this alone.

On behalf of the hundreds of mentoring programs and the more than 21,000 of mentored youth across CT, we commend you for your past support of our prevention work in all areas. We strongly encourage you to continue this wise investment in our young people and in our state's future workforce. A young mentee Thomas told me last Thursday night at a community dinner as he was speaking for young people in his high school, “Mentors show kids that if they can do it, I can do it too.” Thank you for your consideration.

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