

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:

H.B. No. 5044: An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017.

Submitted By: Susan Lee, RN, Board Chair, Covenant to Care for Children

February 11, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Susan Lee, RN, and I am the Board Chair of Covenant to Care for Children.

I would like to share my concerns with House Bill 5044: An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017. In particular, I wanted to express my sincere concerns to the funding reductions for Covenant to Care for Children programs. This funding reduction would threaten critical services to at risk Connecticut children and families in our state.

Covenant to Care for Children is a statewide non-profit agency that provides assistance to abused, neglected and/or impoverished children. We provide basic, essential goods for children, age's birth to 18. These basic, essential goods include new twin beds, car seats, school uniforms, winter clothing, and so on; anything that a child needs to succeed in school and life.

Covenant to Care for Children is unique in that we partner with over 200 faith and/or community based organizations to provide children with these basic essential goods. Many of the children receiving these goods are involved with the Department of Children and Families or are at a high risk of becoming involved with the Department. Often the goods provided by CCC, prevent the removal of the child from the home, or, in some instances, results in the reunification of the child with their caregiver(s). In still other cases, the basic goods provided prevent disruption of the family.

Examples that demonstrate the services Covenant to Care for Children provides are:

- The provision of a new twin bed and linens; many times a Social Worker will go into a home for an assessment and without a bed of their own, the child is at risk of being removed from the home.
- The provision of school uniforms (simply, khaki pants and a polo shirt –often obtained from a large discount store). When children's school uniforms no longer fit them because they've grown, they often will not go to school because of the embarrassment and shame of not having clothing that fits. .

In FY 15, CCC provided goods to approximately 23,000 children in Connecticut, an increase of 10,000 children, over the prior Fiscal Year, and after incurring a rescission of almost \$8K.

As lean as we have been, CCC has made cuts in our budget as funding has been reduced. We are currently understaffed to handle the significant increase in requests for the basic, essential goods and services we provide. Our organization now has only six employees, only two of which are full time. The opportunities to increase our partnerships, and thereby increase the good and services we could otherwise provide, are affected by this minimal staffing.

In the current FY, we have seen our funding reduced by \$8,000 and then by another \$1,600 by the discretionary authority given to the Governor. This may not seem like a lot, but to our small organization it has a serious impact. In real terms, it means, that 36 beds won't be purchased for children who have no bed to sleep in; or 80 car seats won't be purchased; or 180 school uniforms won't be purchased.

Please oppose any further budgetary cuts to Covenant to Care for Children.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, or for additional information.

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