



**TESTIMONY FOR H.B. No. 5044:
AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR
ENDING JUNE 30, 2017.**

Submitted By: Marek Kukulka, Chief Executive Officer,
Catholic Charities, Inc. Archdiocese of Hartford

*To the Appropriations Human Services Subcommittee
February 11, 2016, Department of Social Services*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Flexer, Representative Abercrombie and Distinguished members of the Appropriations Human Services Subcommittee; my name is Marek Kukulka and I am the CEO of Catholic Charities, Inc. Archdiocese of Hartford.

Catholic Charities is a family and children's human services agency which provides services to over 26,000 individuals and families without regard to race, religion, or economic circumstances each year. The agency offers a wide range of human services across 34 sites in the Hartford, Litchfield, and New Haven counties. Services include: programs for families and children with significant mental illness, substance use disorders, basic human needs, case management services supporting employment and self sufficiency, parenting education, family centers strengthening local neighborhoods, group homes for developmentally disabled adults, services to victims of domestic or community violence, early childhood education, infant toddler care, comprehensive youth services, adoption, refugee settlement and immigration services, and elderly care.

Catholic Charities is the largest provider of Safety Net Services Network administered through the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies (CCFSA). This program is designed to support families facing poverty. The objective of this program is to provide last resort human services and support for families who have exhausted their state benefits and are at risk of losing critical, last resort resources.

This program is dedicated to empowering families to succeed by identifying and reducing barriers to employment, increasing access to community resources, and minimizing risk to children. The program is committed to identifying family strengths and helping to empower families to use these strengths to succeed in employment, education and community building. Families are supported to address their barriers to self-sufficiency giving them both hope and support for critical changes needed for their bright and more hopeful future.

Last year this program provided services to approximately 4000 families referred by DSS and DOL to break down barriers and assure that families are safe, physically and mentally healthy, and able to find employment, education and financial stability.

This program has helped our clients become self-reliant and reduced dependence on state benefits and created economic stimulus. People moved from depending on state aid to being productive taxpayers. This was demonstrated through reduction in clients receiving TANF benefits, reduction in clients receiving SNAP benefits and in earnings through new employment.



Catholic Charities

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Although it has been proven to be highly effective in helping families reduce barriers to independence, find and maintain employment, secure safe and affordable housing and access basic needs to stabilize their families, the program has been cut year after year. Service demands have grown and there is no room to cut except to reduce services to families in need.

Any cuts to the Safety Net Program are short sighted and will result in hundreds of our state's families remaining in poverty while negatively impacting Connecticut's economy. It will result in families and children to remain poor and perpetuate intergenerational poverty.

I urge you to fully fund the Safety Net Services program. This is a core program to support families facing the many challenges of poverty. Please do not be indifferent to the devastating impact any cut to the Safety Net Program would make on at-risk families and children.

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

Contact information Marek Kukulka, CEO, Catholic Charities, Inc. Archdiocese of Hartford,
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