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Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Committee Members,

**My testimony is in opposition to the proposed elimination of funding for the State of Connecticut, Fatherhood Initiative Programming from the DSS budget.**

Despite the fact that fatherlessness is the number 1 factor contributing to child poverty, each year the Governor's Budget proposes elimination of funding to support fatherhood initiative programming.

I work at Madonna Place in Norwich, CT where the Fatherhood Initiative Program is a vital asset to our community.

I have witnessed first-hand how desperately fathers want to work out the issues in their lives to be more emotionally, physically and financially available to their children. Through the Fatherhood Program they are given the opportunity gain knowledge, confidence and support to achieve their goals.

Research has demonstrated that fatherhood absence has a detrimental impact on children; they are more likely to be poor, become sexually active at an early age, have lower educational achievement, become involved in the juvenile legal system, and have more physical and social-emotional health problems.

There is a "father factor" or statistic available for almost every social concern affecting children and families. Conversely, research shows that positive fatherhood involvement leads to valuable emotional outcomes for children. (Fatherhood Facts, National Fatherhood Initiative, 2011) This conclusion provides the support and evidence for the work we do to support fatherhood involvement.

Issues to be addressed:

In working with fathers, the following barriers are frequently present, which have been identified as impeding fatherhood involvement:

- Levels of education and income (under educated, under and unemployed)
- History of incarceration
- Lack of knowledge of parenting /child development
- History of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental illness
- Fathers current relationship , or history with the child's mother
- Lack of knowledge of the family court system
- Involvement with the Department of Children and Families

It would be tragic to eliminate funding for this program. The fathers that we serve would no longer have access to the critical services that help eliminate/reduce the above barriers to being an active participant in their child's/children's life/lives.

**I would find it a great disservice to fathers, children and our community if the Fatherhood Program were cut from the budget.**

**I am opposed to the Governor's proposed generic Agency Operations Budgeting. We need line item budgeting. CT residents deserve transparency.**