

Testimony Submitted by Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Inc.

*Pathways/Senderos Center*

to the

Appropriations Committee

2/11/16

Good evening. My name is Nicholas Jakubowski. I am the Co-Executive Director of Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy, Inc., also known as the Pathways/Senderos Center. I am here to respectfully request that funding for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI) be reinstated into the Department of Social Service budget.

Thank you so much for your prior support of our successfully evaluated teen pregnancy prevention efforts in New Britain, a city with immense poverty and tremendous need for programs that assist, educate and inspire our students. The investment in our program has helped the highest risk teens remain pregnancy free, graduate from high school and enroll into post-secondary education.

Teen pregnancy costs the state money, lots of money. It is not just a baby that gets created when there is a teen birth. A cycle of poverty, crime, educational deficiency and more teen babies are just some of the negative outcomes of a child having another child. 75% of pregnant teens had mothers who were teen moms. Boys born to teen mothers are three times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers who are born to older females. Children born to teen parents are 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade, require special education and drop out of school. Shelters that house battered women and their children see a disproportionate number of families started by teens. These numbers become even scarier when you look at the population of students that Pathways/Senderos targets: inner city, poverty stricken Latinos. Across the nation, 50% of Latinas get pregnant before the age of 20. In 2010, teen births cost the State of Connecticut \$116 million dollars. Comparatively, programs that aim to prevent teen pregnancy cost the tax payers of CT \$1.9 million dollars per year, 1.2% the cost the State pays for teen births. Clearly, that is money well spent. Pathways, and TPPI programs, are designed for, attract and retain youth most at risk for early pregnancy, proven by our latest independent evaluated progress report. All the programs funded under the TPPI utilize only science-based best practices for preventing teen pregnancies. DSS funded TPPI programs have economic benefits, both for the adolescents served and their communities. These are related to impacts such as higher future earnings (and associated tax revenues) from better academic performance and high school completion. Preventing too-early parenthood also reduces long term social costs associated with teen births including: the participation of teen mothers in public assistance programs, and the participation in child welfare, criminal justice, and public health systems among children born to teen parents.

Our scientifically-evaluated, results-based accountability positively impacts society immediately and in the long term. Yale University's Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program published a study on the cost benefits of Teen Pregnancy Prevention programs, using Pathways/Senderos as case study organization, and found that spending money on pregnancy prevention programs is very cost effective when compared to local, state and federal governments paying for the cost of teen parents and their child. In 2009 an independent economic evaluation of one long-standing TPPI program concluded that by young adulthood, the combined shorter and long-term economic benefits (from high school graduation) outweighed program costs. This study, which was conducted by a research team that included Yale University School of Medicine and the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and was published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that when estimated economic benefits are accrued through young adulthood, social benefits outweighed social costs by age 20 and reached almost \$10,500 per adolescent per year by age 30. The results of this evaluation clearly demonstrate the value of considering the long-range cost effectiveness of programs when planning and funding teen pregnancy prevention strategies.

For over 23 years Pathways/Senderos has been a beacon of hope for the students that take part in the program. We are not just an "after school program" or a "summer program." We are a year round, 52 weeks, 5 days a week program. Pathways/Senderos takes a holistic, long term approach to Teen pregnancy, using services designed specifically to address the root causes of teen pregnancy. We are a second family to all of our participants. On a daily basis our staff plays the role of mother, father, brother, sister, counselor and friend to all of our students. Pathways has demonstrated independently evaluated and documented success in assisting the highest risk teens avoid pregnancy and other risk taking behaviors while concurrently pursuing academic achievement, leadership development, and youth empowerment.

We are proud of our program. We are proud of our successes. We are proud that for 23 years, we have helped change the fortunes of our students and their families by giving them something to strive for other than being a teen parent, working menial jobs and continuing the intergenerational cycle of poverty and teen births. We are proud to be part of a statewide initiative that has documented success in working with teens and curbing pregnancy amongst them. We know that the choices you all face in the next few months regarding the finalized budget are tough and that many worthwhile programs and initiatives will not be funded. But if the State is serious about helping youth curb their high risk behaviors, helping youth advance beyond high school and into college and helping youth survive their teen year's pregnancy free and with a vision for their future, then this committee and the entire state legislator has to restore the funding for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative. Programs like Pathways are facilitators of making the change in the lives in our youth that we all want to see in Connecticut.