



**Torrington Even Start  
A Family Learning Program**

Written Testimony of Elena Sileo and Jim Dziekan  
Parent, Torrington Even Start Program  
Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. Our names are Elena Sileo and Jim Dziekan. We are Torrington Even Start Parent Educators. Even Start is a family learning program that provides comprehensive family-centered education programs to improve children's academic success and to increase parents' economic opportunities.

We are writing to urge you to reinstate funding for the Even Start Program line item in the Office of Early Childhood budget to support local two generation learning.

In our community, the Torrington Early Childhood Collaborative in Partnership with the Torrington Public Schools, received \$146,952.67 from this line item which was leveraged and matched resulting in more than \$150,000 to support creating healthy outcomes for families with young children and paving a way to higher education and careers.

As Parent Educators for the Even Start Young Parents Program, we are asking for you please not to cut off our funding. We currently teach young mothers and fathers not only the crucially needed parenting skills, but also life skills that they so desperately need in order to be successful parents. From ages and stages, to discipline, safety, child laws, health care, interactive literacy activities, and much, much more, this comprehensive program teaches responsibility for all aspects of the students' young lives. The skills that students learn in the Even Start Program are resiliency skills that they can use to 'break the cycles' for their children. We ask that you please do not cut the funding off for these young parents. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Elena Sileo and Jim Dziekan

Even Start Parent Educators