



February 16, 2016

Testimony to Appropriations Committee
Kim Jackson, New Britain Family Resource Centers

Good afternoon, Representative Walker, Senator Bye and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Kim Jackson from New Britain Family Resource Centers speaking on behalf of the Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance. The FRC Alliance works to promote and strengthen 74 state-funded Family Resource Centers (FRCs) located in 41 school districts throughout the state. The FRC model builds upon the basics: families, neighborhoods and academics to support an integrated approach focused upon creating stronger families. Every FRC operates as a system of partnerships between the school and other community resources to promote the development of a shared vision across community, agencies and services. Each is developed based on a local needs assessment which supports comprehensive educational reform where parents are engaged as full partners. For this reason, the core services delivered by an FRC may differ from site to site.

As with other programs, we have been consolidated in the Governor's Education budget and have no idea whether programs will be funded at any level after July 1. We are urging you to reject the Governor's proposal to consolidate funds into a block grant. Instead we strongly recommend that you maintain a line item in the budget for Family Resource Centers and keep our current funding level which is presently a \$109,500 per site.

FRC's leverage available funding and get the biggest bang for their buck. FRC funding is braided with other funding: Graustein Memorial Fund, United Way, School Readiness dollars, Care4Kids, Federal PIP grants, funding from Boards of Education, and other philanthropic or local funding.

FRC's employ the Parents As Teachers curriculum: a federally-approved, evidence-based home visitation program grounded in the latest research, with curricula that support a parent's role in promoting school readiness and healthy development of children. The approach is intimate and relationship-based. The program embraces learning experiences that are relevant and customized for the individual needs of each family and child.

In 2014-2015: 3,386 families were served using the PAT Home visiting model in Connecticut and a total of 48,093 Home Visits were conducted. Family Resource Centers emphasize the importance of serving all families and all children and continue to serve the diverse populations seen across the State, specifically:

- 42.7% Hispanic or Latino
- 57.3% Non-Hispanic/Latino families

- 31.7% Black/African-American

Additionally, focus on at-risk families and tailoring to their needs is of utmost importance. Of the 3,386 families:

- 17% were Teen Parents
- 29% were families with low education
- 75% were low income
- 7% were families with chronic health issues or disabilities.

P.A.T. Outcomes include:

- improved language and literacy for young and school age children
- increased entire family engagement in children's learning and engagement with their schools,
- increased school achievement for children
- reductions in the achievement gap for low income children at kindergarten entry
- identification and treatment of developmental delays well before the K-12 years
- improved parenting knowledge and skills
- reduced child maltreatment
- increased family self-sufficiency
- child health outcome, such as:
 - increased child immunization rates
 - lower body mass index rates
 - higher birth weights
 - improved family well-being
 - increased family health literacy

FRC's are part of the new Two Generational Pilot program which places families at the center, and the coordination work upon agencies to ensure that whole family interests and needs are addressed - FRC's have been doing since 1985.

In addition to home visitation, we also provide intergenerational literacy programs, before and after school childcare, school readiness, adult education, Circle of Security Parenting (required for certain DCF staff), Conscious Discipline for parents and teachers, Raising Readers, parent/child interactive play & learn groups (play with a purpose), support for Home Daycare Providers, positive youth development school events/programs. (See attached).

One of the critical services we provide is screening. We use the Ages & Stages Child Development and Social Emotional screenings with links to the CT Birth-3 system up until age 3, and with the schools support services after the age of 3. These screenings are key in today's society for identifying issues at a very early age and providing a continuum of support for the child and the parent.

Due in great part to our location in the schools, Family Resource Centers are strategically aligned to improving student achievement efforts by supporting parental involvement and family learning initiatives. Enhancing the family-school connections assists parents in becoming full partners in their children's education.

Thank you on behalf of Connecticut families and children for the many years of support you have given Family Resource Centers.

In closing, Lori Borysewicz will share a family story with you.

The following shared story from the Plainville Family Resource Center illustrates how the integrated services of the FRC come together to support families: *"The family initially came to the program due to the mother's need for increased English language fluency. She had a goal of improving skills needed for employment. Once she enrolled in the FRC Adult Education classes, her children participated in language immersion Play & Learn Groups (which Mom attended with them when not in class.) FRC staff assisted the family with community resources community and referrals for energy/ food assistance. Mom was guided with issues of available transportation and possible future training/employment possibilities. Both children demonstrated the need for more structure, and their mother worked with parent educators to introduce routine in the family schedule and reasonable expectations for behavior in the home. The older child was approaching Kindergarten age and needed additional support in developing self-regulation and social skills. FRC staff helped Mom enroll him in School Readiness. This helped him increase many necessary skills, and become more socially adept. Through ideas and activities the mother gained through Families in Training/Parents as Teachers (PAT) groups and personal visits, her children increased their verbalization and their home had increased literacy opportunities. Mom came to trust the program staff, giving her the resolve to confide in them months later when she was involved as a victim of domestic violence. She revealed her situation and emotional distress, not knowing what she could or should do. A parent educator helped with both immediate and long-term solutions and with referrals for safe shelter and material needs for the woman and her family. Through this support, this family has been able to be resilient and move forward with hope. This woman shared her appreciation of FRC with the parent educator, for literacy support and all the help she has received for daily living challenges. "It means the world to me," she said."*

Thank you. Are there any questions?