



**The Center for  
Family Justice**

**Testimony Regarding  
Appropriations Committee Meeting  
February 18, 2016  
Governor's Budget Proposal**

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**PRESIDENT, CEO:**

**Debra A. Greenwood**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Flexor, Representative Abercrombie, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Representative McGorty, Representative Rosario, Representative Baker, Representative Santiago and members of the committee. The Center for Family Justice provided life-saving services to over 8,567 people in FY 2015. We provide Domestic Violence Advocacy, Sexual Violence Advocacy, Multidisciplinary Investigative Team services for children who disclose sexual or physical abuse, Legal Services, Criminal Court Advocacy, Civil Court Advocacy, and Community Education and Prevention. We serve victims and their children in the towns of Bridgeport, Fairfield, Easton, Stratford, Trumbull, and Monroe.

Funding for rape crisis programs in the Department of Public Health budget is essential for community based sexual assault crisis programs to provide crisis intervention and advocacy services to thousands of child, adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence. We, at The Center for Family Justice, oppose the governor's proposal for a 5.75 cut and the consolidation of funding for sexual assault victims into a general fund. It is unclear how the 5.75 cut will be allocated and therefore, total elimination of our funding is a real threat.

While it is difficult under this proposal (with so many unanswered questions regarding agency process, decision making and appropriate allocations) to speak to an unknown specific cut. It is important to note that a proposed cut at any level is contrary to our state's commitment to address sexual violence, With so much attention being drawn to campus sexual violence, sexual assault in the military and new federal and state laws encouraging collaboration have victims step forward; now is not the time to cut direct support to the victims and survivors of sexual violence who need our help and support to seek care and justice. Rape crisis services are the only programs in our state that specialize in the counseling and advocacy needs of sexual assault survivors

The Center for Family Justice staffs free and confidential 24/7 hotlines in English and Spanish. We provide accompaniment and support for victims at the hospital, police stations and courts. We provide access to pro bono legal services specifically for victims of sexual violence to ensure their rights are not being violated. We provide support groups to victims of sexual violence so that they can begin to heal and begin their journey toward survivorship. Additionally, we





**The Center for Family Justice**

provide area colleges, universities, and school age children with essential prevention education services.

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On January 19, 2016, The Connecticut Post published an op-ed article entitled, "Why the Cosby Case Matters," by our CEO and President, Debra Greenwood. The article touched on the importance of the Montgomery County, PA prosecutor filing charges against Bill Cosby for an alleged 2004 drugging and sexual assault. As a result of reading this article and becoming aware of the services offered at The Center for Family Justice, a woman in our catchment area reported a very serious sexual assault to her local police. The police immediately connected this woman to our office so that she could begin receiving crisis intervention services, which in this instance turned out to be life-saving, as the woman was so distraught as to contemplate taking her own life. Without the essential rape crisis line item in the state budget, The Center for Family Justice would not have the funds to provide even remotely adequate services to the victims of sexual violence in our area.

On behalf of The Center for Family Justice, and all of the victims of sexual violence in our state, we respectfully request that you oppose the Governor's proposed budget and restore the rape crisis line item at full funding.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Angela Schlingheyde  
Coordinator of Civil Legal Services

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