HB # 5035 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNUIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2019

Distinguished members of the Committee, I am Christine Keys, Senior Director of Community Based Programs at Klingberg Family Centers. Klingberg has worked with The Governor’s Prevention Partnership for over 7 years, and I would urge the maximum support for The Partnership in this year’s budget.

Klingberg Family Centers is a multi-service, non-profit organization based in New Britain, CT. that provides statewide mentoring services, foster care, prevention education and clinical services to at-risk, high risk and adjudicated delinquent youth involved with the juvenile justice and/or child welfare system. Through the resources and expertise held within the Partnership, Klingberg has gained a great deal of training and technical assistance, in addition to forming new relationships and partnerships which has helped in improving the quality of our mentoring program. Klingberg now has the tools and information required to meet the various benchmarks of mentoring best practices. As a result of the support from The Partnership, we have strengthened our programmatic practices and have built our capacity to serve more youth.

We have doubled our capacity to serve youth and would not have able to do so without the support of The Partnership. Since 2012, Klingberg has successfully matched over 95 youth with specially trained adult volunteer mentors. We have been able to integrate and focus program efforts to serve the highest risk juvenile justice-involved youth that are also at risk for or victims of human trafficking. Together, we work hard to change the narrative of lives of young people.

Shana, a 15 year old female, was referred to the mentoring program. At the time, she was in 9th grade, failing most of her classes, frequently absent from school, and had an arrest history. One year later, Shana is attending school regularly and has improved her grades, has formed new and positive peer relationships, and has not had any further arrests. Shana reports that her relationship with her mentor has helped her build her self-esteem, find better ways to communicate with her mother and peers, and feel like she has a someone who cares just about her. This is only one story of many.

Thank you for your time and I urge you to consider fully funding The Governor’s Prevention Partnership at the maximum level possible to ensure we can continue to serve our juvenile justice-involved youth through mentoring.

Christine Keys, LMSW
Senior Director, Community Based Programs
Youth Mentoring Services
Klingberg Family Centers