March 5, 2019

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am here to comment on H.B. 7148 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2021.

I am Dr. David Santis, executive director of Covenant to Care for Children.

I am asking you to support the funding proposal for Covenant to Care for Children (CCC) at least at the level proposed by the Governor ($161,412) in his budget proposal.

Covenant to Care for Children provides a safety net for abused, neglected or impoverished children in Connecticut by providing essential support in moments that are critical for a child’s ability to thrive and a family’s ability to stay together.

We fulfill this mission by partnering with State agencies, faith-based communities, and other organizations that share our dedication to improving the lives and futures of at-risk children in Connecticut. Through our collaborative system of program delivery, we mobilize the generosity of caring individuals and leverage the resources of social service agencies to provide direct assistance and critical goods to families struggling to meet the basic needs of their children.

In 2018, some of our successes included:

- Over 11,000 children in Connecticut received the goods they needed.
- 765 received a school backpack, while 135 received assistance to purchase a school uniform
- $8,000 of basic, essential goods were delivered in Litchfield County through a grant by the Northwestern Connecticut Community Foundation
- 414 children received gently used clothing from our Community Closet along with newborn baby items.
- Over 2,300 children received holiday gifts
- 438 individuals (268 children/160 adults) in Hartford and the New Britain area received food assistance that included staples and fresh food through our collaboration with Asylum Hill Congregational Church and Kensington Congregational Church.
- And the list could go on…
Now in its thirty-second year, CCC has provided basic, essential goods to over 818,000 children throughout Connecticut. We currently operate with a staff of seven (3FT/3PT) and have partnerships/collaborations with over 100 organizations throughout Connecticut.

CCC strives to allow kids to be kids in all the positive ways that make for a promising life. Our goods and services are provided to kids that are more likely not to graduate from high school, more likely to face chronic unemployment or underemployment, kids that have a high likelihood of being homeless at some point in their lives, without intervention.

Again, I ask, on behalf of the children, for your support this budget season.

Thank You,

David V. Santis, Ph.D., Executive Director
Covenant to Care for Children, Inc.
Children Served Through Covenant to Care for Children

Fiscal Year 2018

By

DCF Sub-Region

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Fast Facts for Covenant to Care for Children, Inc. (CCC)

All figures are for FY18, unless noted.

Covenant to Care for Children provides for the most basic tangible needs of children in Connecticut, ages birth to 18 who are victims of abuse, neglect and/or who are impoverished.

We serve the entire state of Connecticut.

Last Fiscal year, 10,959 children statewide received basic necessities (beds, clothing, coats) through CCC’s network of faith and community based organizations, volunteers, individual donors and businesses valued at $329,464.00. In addition, 268 children and 160 adults received assistance from the Food Pantries at Asylum Hill Congregational Church and Kensington Congregational Church valued at $7,570.23.

Our largest funder is a contract administered by the Department of Children and Families

- The Governor’s budget recommends $161,412 for FY20 & 21.
- A study by students from the University of Hartford found that for each $1 received, $6.80 was returned to the state in goods and services.

Some basic facts about the organization:

- CCC is in its 32nd year, and in that time has helped over 818,890 children through December 31, 2018 in Connecticut.
- Our goal is 1 Million children.
- Our total operating budget is $425,894 for July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019.
- CCC has 6 employees: 3 full-time and 3 part-time.
- The Adopt A Social Worker Program is understaffed at 1 full-time and 1 part-time, optimal staffing level would be 4 full-time.

Our Programs:

Adopt A Social Worker (AASW) provides basic goods for kids. Faith or community based organizations adopt a children’s protective service caseworker and make an agreement to provide for the material goods needed by the child and their caregivers. No other organization in CT has agreements with over 100 organizations to provide these basic goods for kids. There are over 500 volunteers connected with the program.
Critical Goods Delivery Program for children is our response to the needs of families who at risk of losing their children or who are being reunified with their children and must have certain material goods before that can happen; beds, cribs, household items.

Children's Enrichment Fund for children responds to unusual requests for children and youth. Examples are school uniforms, car seats, special dietary needs, etc.

Crisis Food Support Program a partnership with Asylum Hill Congregational Church and Kensington Congregational Church provides delivery of fresh and staple foods for one-time emergencies in families with children in Hartford and the New Britain areas. Last year, 268 children and 160 adults received assistance valued at $7,570.23.

A Success Story

Recently, a social worker from the Department of Children and Families was sent to investigate a charge of child neglect. Upon her arrival at the apartment, the social worker met a single mother who was caring for two young children and a newborn. The apartment had no furniture. With no beds, chairs, tables or dressers, it was completely vacant. The family slept on the floor and used their clothing for bedding. The mother had fled a civil war in her country of origin and escaped to America. She spoke very little English but had quickly secured three part-time jobs which provided just enough money to pay the rent and buy her family food.

However, according to Connecticut standards, the absence of furniture in the apartment meant the social worker would have to file a report indicating the mother was neglectful. Her three children would be removed from her care, most likely separated and eventually placed in various foster homes. Because of the woman's limited understanding of the language and laws, it would be highly unlikely she could have navigated the system to ever reunite her innocent family.

The social worker did have another option available to her that day and she took it! She picked up a phone and called Covenant to Care for Children. Almost immediately, our Critical Goods Program Director and a volunteer loaded our agency’s truck with donated furniture items we regularly pick-up and keep in our staging area. We supplied this single mother and her three young children with beds, dressers and a kitchen table with chairs.

In the final analysis, that small gesture we extended will have a positive life-long impact on this family and avoid the trauma and pain of a separated mother and her children.

If you would like to know more about CCC, please visit our website (www.covenanttocare.org), or call (860) 243-1806.