Good evening honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Nick Lebron and I’m a Regional Coordinator in the Safety Net Program. The Safety Net Program helps families through home-based services that focus on case management, care coordination, child development and guidance to promote overall self-sufficiency to the families we serve. It is a statewide program and we work in all of the diverse communities CT has to offer.

The budgeting the state faces during these challenging times are real however the daily trials and tribulations the families face who deal with poverty can be overwhelming and traumatic. The adverse risk factors that faces these families range from being climate refugees, domestic violence victims, families who are recovering from opioid addiction or are suffering from generational poverty. We partner with the thousands of families we serve on an annually basis and I can say all of them truly benefit from this program. The success stories range on a case by case basis. One family’s success may be finding and keeping employment, connections to housing while others maybe locating child care or learning new skills that they can better support their children. The more resiliencies we build in families the better the outcomes for the families, communities and the state. The goal is always to keep their motivation levels high even though they are faced with the lowest of circumstances.

The Safety net program is a good investment for the state as it is effective, individualized and breaks the cycle of intergenerational poverty. I am asking that you support the governor’s budget for the safety net program as it is of extreme importance to all communities across the state.

Sincerely

Nick Lebron
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Here are some client stories:

1. Client was a 26 year old single Hispanic female who was assigned to my case not quite a year ago. She had two children who were also female 2 and 4 years old. She was 4 months pregnant with her 3rd child. The father of the children had moved on and client was on her own. She had a supportive father of her own who lived in New Haven and was disabled. Her mother died when she was a child. Client was living in a filthy, roaches infested and bed-bug infested multi-
apartment building in Waterbury. She feared for her children and her own safety as drug deals and drug use was prevalent in the building. She being a NAT or Safety Net had exhausted all of her cash assistance and was asking for help to get into a safer apartment. She was not working but looking for work. The girls were both in daycare and client had reserved a spot for the newborn where he would be able to attend at 6 weeks or more. We began looking for jobs and apartments. Client was able to find part-time work and then with the help of her father’s friend was able to get an apartment that was clean, safe and affordable. Meanwhile we did budgeting to keep client money flowing into the right places. Client never faced an eviction and we were able to get her on the list for Waterbury Housing Authority low-income apartments. Client father helped with security and first month along with other community action agencies. We were able to help with her electric bill which was very high and kept her in the current apartment by paying a next month payment for her. Client began to have problems with her pregnancy and lost her job because of the stress was getting to her as she went into a deep depression. She was referred to Catholic Charities for counseling. She began attending regular sessions which helped with the stress. Soon after her name came up on the list of low-income housing and she was able to move into the new apartment but the baby had decided to come. While in the hospital, after giving birth normally to a beautiful baby boy, she was job searching on her phone and landed an interview with Gaylord Hospital. The very week that client left the hospital, she moved into her new apartment and had a job interview. Client was hired and had to go for a background check and needed uniforms as the job was attending to patients by moving them to and from the elevators to get to rooms and testing. Case Management was able to find used but excellent condition uniforms for her to start. Client needed to get a bus to the green in Waterbury where a Van would transport to the Hospital in Wallingford. Our program was able to supply a bus pass for her to start. Once client began making regular paychecks, we budgeted and the rent adjusted and the eventually the baby got into daycare. Client was able to afford her bills and save a few dollars. Her hours went from 20 to 35 weekly depending on the need. Client signed up for GED classes and is now working toward her high school diploma. She continues the job today and will go into a larger apartment soon. The hospital would like her to go back to school to get her CNA so that she can do nursing assistance with them. She is also working on getting her driver’s license. The diaper bank at NYFS has been supportive with the new baby and the case has since closed. Client still calls from time to time as she is in follow-up and asks some budgeting questions. Regular home visits and motivation from the case manager in this program helped client to move forward with her life as well as financial support from the program and other programs that were referred.

2. Client was a 30 year old single Caucasian female with three children. A male 9 years old, a female 7 years old and a 2 month old son. Client was assigned to my case as a NAT or Safety Net. She had exhausted all of her cash assistance over the years. Client was living in one room in Winsted with a shared bathroom by the apartment building. There was nowhere to sleep except the floor and drugs in the building. It was affordable. Client was getting her income tax return and we did some budgeting. It was her will to pay a few months’ rent in advance because she was not working but looking for work. Client had no family in this state. They lived in Mass. She was looking for daycare and needed a larger apartment. Both fathers of the children were incarcerated. There was no child support. Client is a licensed dog groomer and was hoping for work in that area.CM did some research and we were able to find client a job in Torrington. She
had a car and driver’s license. She did smart budgeting with CM and was able to pay insurance and gas while traveling to work. She was able to bring her youngest son with her and became good friends with her employer. The employer relied on her greatly and the job began to grow. The business was new and they worked together on recruiting customers. CM was able to help client with diapers through the NYFS diaper bank and referred client to local food bank and began searching the area for an affordable rents. We came up with a couple in Torrington near her work and she took interest in one. Our program was able to help with security and first month rent. We were also able to help to alleviate some of the electric bill so that client could make budget payments. Client moved into new apartment and our program was able to provide beds and basic needs supplies to set up the new space. Client case is recently successfully closed as client had shown that she would be able to afford her bills and move forward with her life. Careful budgeting, regular home visits, support and motivation were maintained. Client case is now in follow up.

3. The family was refer to as AT-EM case. When the case opened, the client lived in a house that was infect with cockroaches and mouse, I remember that the first time I made an appointment with the client to open the case the cockroaches walked on the dining table and the house was not in good condition. The goals set for this family were to move to a new apartment. The client has medical problems she had applied in the past for the social security disability and as she was deny, she had not tried to apply again. Case manager informed her about the process and referred her to a lawyer to help her reapply. Client food stamps was no enough for a month, and because client house was, infect with cockroaches and mouse client needs furniture and useful for the kitchen. During the time, that the case was open case manager worked with the client on how to manage their budget. Case manager got a program in the community through Catholic Charities that helped client financially to pay the deposit of the apartment to move. Case manager referred client to Bob’s Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation and client received a gift card. The TANF case manager program provided to client a gift card and cleaning supply for a home. Case manager provided to client utensils for use in the kitchen. Case manager provided community information list of food pantry and locations that client can use and provided food from Catholic Charities food pantry.