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Cheryl Burack, Executive Director, Family Centered Services of CT, Inc.

Senate and House Republican Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Informational Hearing May 11, 2015

Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Cheryl Burack and I am Executive Director of Family Centered Services of CT, Inc., where we work with families to help them become safe and nurturing places where children can succeed.

I would like to strongly support raising additional revenue to help maintain Connecticut's social safety net. I would like to start by thanking you for recognizing the devastating nature of the cuts proposed in Governor Malloy's budget, and for working to mitigate the impact of those cuts on some of Connecticut's most vulnerable child and adult citizens.

The Governor's budget cuts nearly \$600 million from programs critical to families across the state, including \$49.3 million from the HUSKY health insurance program for children, families, and pregnant women and \$11.3 million from the Office of Early Childhood. The DSS-funded Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative was totally eliminated, even though it was endorsed by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee of the CT General Assembly in 2012. This Committee concluded that DSS has established a "solid methodology for TPPI funding that should continue to be applied", and that state contract requirements and outcome measures were met or exceeded consistently. The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program is in some of the State's highest risk communities, but our teen pregnancy rate is a little over 1%, compared to the statewide average of 5.5%. This raises the question of do we pay now or pay later?

I understand that spending plans need revenue to fund them, and that a responsible spending plan must be balanced. I realize that difficult choices must be made. I support the revenue ideas

of groups like Connecticut Voices for Children, including a more progressive income tax, the elimination of certain tax breaks, and raising the cigarette tax.

Thank you once again for hearing the concerns of the hundreds of CT residents who testified at multiple public hearings. Please restore funding to the DSS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, and raise additional revenue to support this and other valuable program services.

Respectfully,

*Cheryl Burack*  
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