



West Haven Community House

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The Community House Takes Hit from State Budget Crisis

(August 15, 2017, West Haven, CT) For 75 years, the Community House has served as THE cornerstone social service agency in West Haven providing critical services to thousands of families with programs including: Head Start, a comprehensive school readiness program for children from low income families; Children & Youth Services, a before and after school program for school aged children; and Community Connections, residential and day programs for adults with intellectual disabilities.

“We have come a long way since 1941, but the need is ever present. For the first time in a long time, because of state-wide budget cuts, our services are in jeopardy and it is more difficult for us to continue to provide the level of service that so many families rely on each day” said Patty Stevens, Executive Director.

As negotiations over the Connecticut state budget continues, proposed budget cuts in education, social services, health care, early childhood, and mental health are damaging and short-sighted. The reduction of 6 days of CT’s Department of Developmental Services (DDS) funding means a potential loss of \$50,000 in Community Connections’ day program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. In addition, DDS will be decreasing the amount of funding per client by potentially 10%. On the residential side of Community Connections, the loss of revenue could approach \$100,000 or more.

“As a result, we are forced to implement 6 furlough days over the year in our Community Connections day program. We are a small agency and we do not have the funds to cover the costs of running this program without the revenue from DDS. Needless to say, we face many challenges as we proceed in this fiscal year with these anticipated cuts”, she continued

Meanwhile, the Care4Kids program remains in crisis shutting thousands of families out of a program that offers parents an affordable way to pay for childcare while they work. Last August, changes to the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) resulted in the closure of the program to all new enrollees with the exception of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) families. Since then the number of child care subsidies for working families has steadily decreased as children continue to age out of the program while very few children are allowed to enroll.

Access to high-quality, reliable childcare is essential to the success of working families. The average annual cost of child care in Connecticut is \$19,521 or 28% of the state median household income, making it far out of the financial reach for many of Connecticut’s working families without the Care4Kids subsidy. Without safe, reliable child care, parents are either unable to contribute to Connecticut’s workforce and achieve financial stability or are forced to place their children in less reliable, or even dangerous, care settings. These cuts will force working parents to choose between paying for childcare or buying food/paying rent, or worse, “latch key” child care will return in greater numbers.

“Our Head Start school readiness and school age child care programs suffered significant losses this past school year, forcing lay-offs, reductions in our capacity and furlough days,” according to Stevens. She added, “... the agency is doing everything possible to attempt to raise money through the agency fundraisers and donor solicitations in order to provide these services to the community with the least amount of disruption to our participants and to our staff, who also face financial challenges of their own through furlough days and/or layoffs.” The Community House is one of the largest employers in West Haven with nearly 160 employees.

A budget must be passed that puts these vulnerable populations first. The deficit should not be balanced on the backs of children or the disabled by cutting services to these individuals and families who rely on these very much needed programs.

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