

February 19, 2020

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I live in Montville, CT and am a staff member of Madonna Place, a nonprofit agency that helps children who are at risk of child abuse and neglect by providing strength-based center and home-based services to their families. I began volunteering with Madonna Place 7 years ago, and then transitioned into employment as a grant writer there in 2018 because of the clear positive impact they were having on children and families in our region through parenting programs, home visiting, fatherhood initiative, family-school connection, and the family support center. Services are primarily based in New London County but extend to Windham and Middlesex Counties for DCF. Our largest source of revenue is the State of Connecticut, and the combination of program eliminations, cuts, rescissions which then become base funding, and almost nonexistent COLA adjustments have negatively impacted Madonna Place and the families and communities we serve. These cuts have directly hurt families in our service area by eliminating vital programs to support health, human service supports, parenting and home visiting. In just the past few years our program alone has had to absorb funding reductions in excess of \$600,000 which has meant we had to end several important programs to high risk families (Parenting Support Services, Families First and Family-School Connection programs all have been eliminated). These were programs for families who are in most need of those preventative, early intervention services.

The State of Connecticut budget and its revenue is the strongest it has been in a decade. It is commendable that the State has built up the Rainy Day Fund. It was certainly a positive step last year that there were fewer budget cuts to nonprofits. But that is not enough, nor is it enough to put out a highly competitive RFP incentive program that does not help program operations. A commitment to a significant base increase is needed for all State funded grants – DSS, DCF, OEC, DMHAS, etc.

Thank you for your consideration and support of Madonna Place, and the thousands of children, families and other individuals in our State that are served daily by the nonprofit community. Only by supporting our children and families in this State will we see improvement in the life conditions we all desire to see in our communities. The impact of funding these programs and services properly and sustainably is positive and far reaching and has both direct and indirect effects on every constituent in the State. We cannot continue to help the community without more funding, and without these programs our communities cannot succeed.

We are counting on you to take a leadership role with this issue. Please feel free to contact me at 860-287-8268 if you would like to discuss this more in person. I would be very happy to speak to you directly about the work we do at Madonna Place, and how our work impacts the communities we serve.

Sincerely

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