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Jose Fuentes, Childrens Service Worker 1
Department of Children and Families
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is Jose Fuentes and I am a Childrens Service Worker with the Department of Children and Families. I am here today to talk about the services DCF provides and ask that you invest and expand those services.

I was born in Aibonito, Puerto Rico in 1972. My parents moved to Connecticut when I was 3 years old along with my 3 siblings. My family and I were very fortunate to receive government assistance in the form of educational grants, housing subsidies and other help that was available to people of low income. When I was 9 years old, there was a crisis in my life that led me to move back to Puerto Rico to live with relatives. After several years I returned to Connecticut and was awarded to the Department Of Children and Families.

At this stage in my life, I had no hope. I was lucky though. Thanks to the state of Connecticut that has fine people working for the DCF like Mr. Francis Davila, who became my social worker and mentor and guided me at a critical stage in my life. If we didn't have those programs available to me my life would have navigated in a different direction. I was one of those adolescents relocating from shelters to group homes from group homes to foster homes and from foster homes to residential care.

Thanks to our programs, I went to college, funded by the Department Of Children And Families. I am asking the Committee to please revisit the budget for the Department of Children And Families and invest and expand in our services. Creating vocational programs does not bring money to the state, treatment does. I have been working for the state of Connecticut, helping adolescents and becoming a positive mentor and providing positive guidance in their lives, like it was provided to me when I was an adolescent. I am not here to save all the kids, but if I can save one, like I was saved, my goal is accomplished.