



H.B. 7148 An Act Concerning the Budget for the State Department of Education

March 6, 2019

Dear Senator Abrams, Representative Rosario, and distinguished members of the Secondary Education Committee for Appropriations, thank you for the opportunity to submit the following testimony regarding the State Department of Education Budget:

My name is Barbara Lockhart and I have been an active board member of the Connecticut Youth Services Association for over 17 years. I have served as the New London Country Chapter representative, the Vice President, the President, and now hold the position of Advocacy Chair. I am also the Director of the Youth Service Bureau in The Town of Montville. I would like to speak to the matter of the Governor's proposed budget cut to the State Department of Education's Enhancement Grant line item for Youth Service Bureaus. This line item is such a small amount \$620,000.00, and even the smallest of cuts (even \$31,000.00) directly and negatively impacts every single YSB! YSBs have a strong commitment to the practice of "taking care of our own". We have learned in over 47 years of serving Connecticut's communities that investing on the front end, and re-investing in what we know works creates a strong recipe for positive and successful outcomes for kids and families. Year after year the YSB state report card from the Department of Education supports this claim.

Many YSBs have operated on shoe string budgets for years, and yet the evidence still shows strong and consistent records of success, despite decreases in funding and increasingly limited resources. The question is how long can this continue if YSBs are unable to build capacity, hire additional qualified, dedicated professionals to address the increases in referrals based on changes in other state systems? The

numbers tell the story the best, more needs, more services, more programs, for more kids and families, but less support funding?

Connecticut General Statute (10-19m) states that YSBs shall be the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment, and follow up services for children, youth, and families. With over 22 plus years of experience in the YSB field I can speak first-hand about the benefits of diversion practices, increased youth and family engagement, the importance of a caring community agency, and the reward of positive outcomes when we invest and reinvest wisely, fiscally, educationally, and socially. YSBs are the state's strongest example of a grass roots, boots on the ground practice!

The ever growing presence of Youth Service Bureaus in the realm of juvenile justice and diversion work is yielding positive results. The most recent state report card data supports this claim. YSBs practice of an "on the ground" direct service approach for youth and families who have become involved in both delinquency and non-judicial situations, makes youth service bureaus both unique and familiar as a community resource for guidance, understanding and assistance. The comfort and familiarity which children, youth, and families share with their local YSBs is reflective of mutual respect, and has a long and positive history. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted: *Barbara A. Lockhart, MS*