

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the Human Services Committee

My name is Rudy Feudo. I am the Executive Director of the Greater Bridgeport Adolescent Pregnancy Program in Bridgeport (GBAPP). GBAPP is a member of the CT Association of Non-Profits .

On behalf of GBAPP's clients, staff, and Board of Directors, I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk to you briefly about the situation that we find ourselves in at the present time as related to short- and long-term funding in our region, and how we can work together to ensure that the service delivery system is strengthened and sustained.

GBAPP is a community-based agency that has been a cornerstone in Bridgeport for 30 years. It is one of a few organizations in the state dedicated to addressing teen pregnancy prevention. GBAPP also provides services in the areas of comprehensive sexuality education, including HIV/AIDS prevention, life skills education, case management, HIV counseling and testing, after-school programming, supportive housing for pregnant and parenting adolescents, and positive youth development. GBAPP touches the lives of 10,000 youth and families annually.

More recently, with the impact of the fiscal crisis in our state and nationally, we had to close our long-serving after-school program serving young people ages 11-16 years. Hundreds of kids in our system were affected from this closing. GBAPP had responded to an RFP from DSS to maintain and expand the program in February of 2009 and we still have not officially heard from them. We understand that the funding is in the DSS budget but they will not release it. We have also felt the sting of other cuts from other state agencies. What to do? We are doing what other hundreds of other non-profits may be doing:

For the first time in 30 years we have instituted a wage freeze for all GBAPP employees. They already receive much less than their public sector colleagues. We have cut vendors such as IT support, travel, and non-mandatory trainings. We have joined an electricity purchasing consortium and modified our employee health insurance plan, passing along increased out-of-pocket expenses to our employees. We are working with our partner agencies to provide services jointly, such as training health educators from other agencies to deliver best practices curriculum in health education to area schools and community agencies.

We are doing our part in cutting costs wherever it is possible. On a statewide basis, we need a long-term strategy to keep non-profits stable with consistent funding and get the best bang for the dollar. How many times have you heard of successful programs that were getting good outcomes shut down because their funding stopped? When funding was received again, these programs would have to start from scratch. Non-Profits has been advocating for long-term solutions with the State for Purchase of Services for years. If federal agencies can award 5 year grants to non-profits to meet their objectives, why can't the State do the same. Remember, what we do not only benefits our clients, but it benefits all of our state citizens as well as the bottom line. Thank you.