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CONTACT: Wade Gibson, Director, Fiscal Policy Center, (203) 498-4240 x113
wgibson@ctvoices.org

Report: Share of State Spending Targeted to Children and Families Has Declined for Two Decades

Over the past two decades, Connecticut has committed less and less of its state budget to young people, according to a new report from the Fiscal Policy Center at Connecticut Voices for Children. The report finds that spending on the “Children’s Budget” – state government spending that directly benefits young people – has dropped from 40% of the state budget in Fiscal Year 1992 to 30% in the current budget year (FY 2014). The report, released today at Connecticut Voices’ State Budget Forum at the Capitol, examines for the first time how overall funding for programs aimed at children and families in health, human services, and education has shifted in recent decades as a share of the state budget.

“Study after study has shown that smart investments in child health and education yield impressive returns that benefit us all,” said Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director of Connecticut Voices for Children. “By shifting funds away from such investments, we diminish opportunities for today’s children and tomorrow’s economy. Anyone who is concerned about the long term fiscal health of our state should be troubled by the trend away from funding services that support children and families.”

The study, which tracked funding for agencies devoted specifically to young people (such as the State Department of Education) and programs larger than \$10 million in other state agencies that benefit children and their families (such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), also finds that:

- Spending on education has fallen by about a third -- from 26% of the state budget to 19% between Fiscal Years 1992 and 2014.
- The mix of funding has shifted toward debt service and fringe benefits for state employees, increasing from 17% to 26% of the state budget over this period. The increases in this category have been driven by healthcare costs for current and former state employees, as well as substantial state borrowing.

The Children’s Budget stands today at \$1.8 billion below where it would be if Connecticut budgeted for children’s programs at the same share of the budget as in FY 1992. Connecticut Voices proposes restoring this Budget over the next decade by phasing in an additional \$180 million each year for children’s programs. That \$180 million would represent less than 1% of the General Fund.

“We can change course. Shifting our public resources back to our children and the future is entirely feasible and necessary,” said Wade Gibson, author of the report and Director of the Fiscal Policy Center at Connecticut Voices. “We need to rebuild our support for public systems such as education that prepare young people to thrive in a rapidly changing world.”

The report, “Introducing the Children’s Budget,” is available on the Connecticut Voices for Children website at www.ctvoices.org.

The Fiscal Policy Center at Connecticut Voices for Children provides research, analysis, and recommendations on state and federal budget and tax policies.

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