



News Release

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Final Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Follows Trend of Disinvesting in Children and Families and Jeopardizes Future Investments

New Haven, CT. - Following hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts in Fiscal Year 2016, Connecticut policymakers tackled the nearly \$1 billion budget deficit in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY 17) by adopting a two-pronged austerity approach that (1) rejects new revenue and (2) abandons best practice “current services” budgeting. Taken together these changes decrease investments in children and families, undermine budget accuracy and transparency, and jeopardize the long term social and economic prosperity of the State.

The final FY 17 budget cut spending on crucial programs that support children and families, as defined by our Children’s Budget, by 3.8 percent (\$233.6 million). While deep, this compares favorably with overall cuts of 5.4 percent (approximately \$1 billion) to the total FY 17 budget, and with cuts of 6.2 percent (nearly \$800 million) to spending not included in our Children’s Budget. Nevertheless, these cuts follow decades of disinvestment from schools, family health, child welfare, and other public services.

“While lawmakers worked hard to spare children and families from some of the deepest cuts proposed in earlier budget drafts, the final compromise still burdens the future of our children and the preparedness of our workforce,” said Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director of Connecticut Voices for Children. “By adopting a frame of austerity budgeting, the State has given undue weight to unsubstantiated claims of tax-flight and missed an opportunity to address very real disparities in opportunity.”

According to Derek Thomas, Fiscal Policy Fellow of Connecticut Voices for Children, the FY17 Budget reverses course in its commitment to budget transparency and accountability. “Best practices budgeting provides a neutral baseline from which to assess changes in current services. Rejecting current services budgeting introduces fiscal obfuscations into the budgeting process,” he said.

To meet the needs of the next generation while addressing the state’s long-term challenges, we recommend the following priorities in future budget setting:

- **Adopt a balanced and transparent approach.** In confronting the fiscal crisis looming over state budget decisions, the commonsense choice for Connecticut should include revenue, rather than a cuts-only approach that threatens an already fragile economic recovery. Moreover, Connecticut should revert to current services budgeting, a best practice that assures transparency and accountability.

- **Protect investment in children and families.** State investment in health care, human services and education to support the next generation are critical to ensuring our children grow up ready to meet their full potential. Already, less than one-third of Connecticut's General Fund spending supports programs that benefit children and families – down from 40 percent in the early 1990s.

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Connecticut Voices for Children is a statewide, research and policy organization that works at the state and federal levels to advance public policies that benefit the state's children, youth and families. For more information on Connecticut Voices, see www.ctvoices.org.