

Welfare

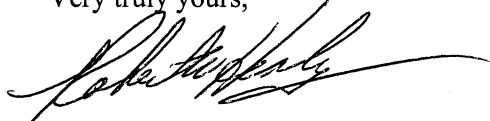
Low-income women-headed families living on Transitional Assistance to Needy Families (TANF or Welfare) are facing state and federal proposals to increase the workfare requirement from 20 to 30 or 40 hours, making it difficult for women to find adequate childcare. Others have made the transition to work, but are working at low-paying jobs, often more than one. Many of these mothers are turning to their teen-aged daughters to provide childcare immediately after school, thereby limiting their opportunities to participate in activities and sports or do to homework. These girls are isolated from their peers and see less opportunity for themselves in the future.

Education

On the local level, the current and pending cuts in state funding for education have forced the Cambridge School Department to abandon the Cambridge Sisters Program. This program, founded by Julia Perez almost 10 years ago, serves only low-income girls with specific focus on girls of color in after-school and summer camp programs. The Cambridge Sisters Program has functioned almost exclusively on outside funding. It received substantial grant funding in the past from the Boston Women's Fund (2 years), the Paul and Phyllis Fireman fund (2 years) and the federal Women's Educational Equity Act grant, which is very prestigious and difficult to obtain (3 years). The administration has decided that it cannot provide local funds to continue this program and thus it will fold following the 2002 Summer camp.

We will continue to monitor the state budget as it affects women and girls, particularly those who are most vulnerable. The mothers involved in our Kitchen Table Conversations group will be playing a more and more visible role in speaking out about the impact of cuts on their lives and those of their children. We appreciate the City Council's commitment to making certain that girls are not left behind as we continue to endure this budget crisis.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec



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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

June 10, 2002

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 02-15, regarding a report on the impact of statewide budget cuts and other state defunding on Cambridge low-income girls and their families, Women's Commission Director Nancy Ryan reports the following:

City Council Order #11 of February 25, 2002 requested that the Women's Commission identify areas in which state budget cuts would affect low-income girls in Cambridge. The Women's Commission has been working with a myriad of organizations to monitor the state budget process which began with emergency cuts made by the Governor in February and continues as the House and Senate produce and debate their budgets. Because the landscape of cuts has shifted continuously, and because girls are affected directly and indirectly by every cut to programs that provide for their families, school systems and neighborhoods, we do not have a precise analysis of how girls are directly affected.

Here are some of the areas that we have been tracking:

Healthcare:

MassHealth There have been continuous threats to limit MassHealth benefits which support many of our low-income families. The Kitchen Table Conversations group, low-income women from Cambridge, testified at the State House to protect the program for themselves and their families. Girls, particularly pre-teen and teen girls, must have regular contact with a primary care physician to support health lifestyles and minimize risky behaviors. At this time, Massachusetts' birth rate among teenagers has been going down and is well below that of the nation. In this moment, juvenile programs remain level-funded while some adult programs, including preventive dentistry, have been cut. The current Senate budget, just out yesterday, maintains MassHealth funding.

Tobacco Settlement Funds These funds support a large number of programs aimed at youth. The House budget gouged, then restored, these funds aimed at reducing smoking among young people. Smoking rates among girls have been increasing nationally and in Massachusetts so these programs are critical to girls' long-term health. Lung cancer is the #1 cancer killer in Massachusetts. In addition, Tobacco funds have supported local programs, like the Health Education Program in the Cambridge Public Schools. There was a move to eliminate some of those funds in the House budget but they have been restored. We have not analyzed the Senate budget on this issue yet.

S-184

Consent Agenda #19

**Awaiting Report Item
Number 02-15**, regarding a
report on the impact of
statewide budget cuts and
other state defunding on
Cambridge low-income girls
and their families.

In City Council June 10, 2002

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