



Good afternoon. I am Charles Venti, Board Member of The Family Success Institute, an organization founded in the premise that families are the bedrock of our society and the most enduring vehicle for enabling current and future generations to succeed in life and to avoid the costly adverse outcomes that social and economic distress fosters. I am here to request funding for A4819, the Community Recovery and Family Success Act, that will support community-based services designed to enable children and families to succeed in life and avoid the costly adverse outcomes that social and economic distress fosters. Our written testimony explains how these funds will be distributed to all 21 counties, supporting grass roots and local government initiatives, and influenced by and for those whose needs are greatest.

In addition to my role with the Institute, I am the current Board Chair of ACNJ, Advocates for Children of New Jersey and our ACNJ Board supports A4819 and has provided suggestions for expediting its implementation, if approved, and for evaluating its effectiveness. I am also a retired State Child Welfare Director and retired Executive Director of the Nicholson Foundation.

Throughout my 48 years of service, I have seen substantial state investments in responding to the distress of family violence, homelessness, hunger, unemployment, emergency health care, bullying, substance abuse, etc. The Family Success Movement, which is taking root and growing in counties and communities across the state today, is leading a transformative shift in our state from treating distress to investing in success. What has become increasingly obvious is that when our children and their families have access to locally organized and supported systems of care and support, and when these systems prioritize community engagement, our residents are more apt to take advantage of them. Investments in preventing negative outcomes, rather than addressing them after they occur, not only make common sense, but they save our taxpayers money. A4819 has been developed in concert with local community residents and leaders such as those that participate in the Family Success Institute State-wide Learning Community. Examples of coordinated systems of care and support have been led by organizations such as the Brick Educational Network in Newark, Center for Family Service in Camden, and NJ Community Development Corporation in Paterson through their Promise Neighborhoods; as well as Monmouth County Government's Monmouth ACTS and the United Way of Central New Jersey's Middlesex County Alliance for Child and Family Success. These afore-mentioned efforts are holistic in nature, informed by community voice, and afford easily accessible "no wrong door" access for residents in the communities they serve. These initiatives have been largely independent of state financial support and are not integrated with state policy and priorities. A4819 develops the capacity for governmental, non-profit, philanthropic and for-profit entities, with similar and complementary missions, to work together.

An appropriation of \$25.4 million in FY 2024 will support community directed needs assessments, service planning, procurements, and program start-up activities in every county. An annualized service continuation of \$45.6 million may be requested in FY2025 to address priority social and economic outcomes. ***The state's FY 2023 budget includes \$7.8 billion of spending for distress-related programs and services, treating conditions which are fueled by a lack of investment supporting children and families. This two-year \$71,000,000 investment in family success represents .09% of one year's budgeted expenditures for those distress-related remediation services.*** Please note that A4819 in its current form calls for a much larger funding over a three-year period and is being amended to reflect this \$71,000,000 request.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.