



Good afternoon. I am Tim Carden, Executive Director 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. I am here to request funding for S2887, 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, designed by and for those whose needs are greatest.

Forty-two years ago this month, I was sworn in as the Commissioner of Human Services, and three weeks later presented the Department budget to this committee; it was the largest agency budget in the state: \$2 billion out of a total state budget of \$6 billion. DHS at that time included the Department of Children & Families and had only recently shed responsibility for the state's prison system with the creation of the Department of Corrections.

1981 was also the first year of the Reagan era federal budget cuts that targeted in particular the so-called "safety net." The actions we took in response – especially empowering local agencies, community advocates, and people with real needs to help determine how best to allocate diminished resources sparked energy, collaboration and innovation in programs, illustrating the efficiency and effectiveness of services designed in a bottoms, holistic and community-based approach. A depleted safety net, bolstered by some efficiencies and innovation, survived, but for those with the least resources or those facing the greatest challenges, real opportunity to thrive was no closer at hand.

Too little has changed in the intervening 42 years which is what brings me before you today. The pandemic, while revealing our collective willingness and capacity to provide real emergent relief, also exposed systemic shortcomings in our pursuit of greater equality of opportunity and wellbeing.

For too many of our neighbors and fellow citizens, there is not enough food, enough child care, enough stable and secure housing. There is not enough proximate and affordable health care, after school, recreation, opportunities for work, clean air, lead free water or family supportive services. In short, even as our social service budgets have swelled, we have continued to fund the treatment of longstanding problems, spending far too little on proven means of solving them. The result: We spend nearly half a million dollars to feed and house an incarcerated teen but lack the program or funding to provide adequate food or secure housing for thousands of families and teens when they need it most. 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.

S2887 requests \$71,000,000 million of funding over the next two fiscal years to support these emerging family success programs. 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. The

\$45.6 million balance of initial funding will be requested in FY 2025 to support a growing volume of family success services. ***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 \$71,000,000 investment in family success represents .09% of one year's budgeted expenditures for those distress-related remediation services).*** Please note that S2887 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.