

# **Healthy Families ❖ Thriving Communities Collaborative Council**

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## **Testimony of Eugene Kinlow On Behalf of the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaborative Council**

before the

**Committee on Human Services, DC Council**

Concerning the

**The Child and Family Services Agency's FY2010 Budget Hearing**

April 3, 2009

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Good afternoon Chairperson Wells and members of the Committee on Human Services. I am Eugene Kinlow, Chair of the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities (HFTC) Collaborative Council. I am representing all of the chairs of the Collaboratives, a number of whom are present for this hearing. They in turn represent many other volunteers who sit on their boards and clock thousands of hours without monetary compensation. They represent both giving and giving back; our best hope for making our fragile neighborhoods healthy.

We appreciate the support shown for the work of the Collaboratives in the Mayor's FY2010 budget as submitted to the Council, especially in this time of diminished resources. As our nation and city struggle with the fallout of a weakened economy, we must continue to support those among us who are the most vulnerable. A growing number of families in the District are confronted with multiple risk factors:

- 32% of all children live in poverty;
- 54% of children live in single parent and father-absent households;
- 36% of District residents are functionally illiterate; and,
- One in ten children is born to a teen mother.

It is even more troubling that certain neighborhoods, especially those east of the river, are where these challenges are the greatest. This concentration of high risk

individuals and families dramatically increases the chances for child abuse and neglect, continued educational failure, unemployment and violent behaviors. And it is these highest risk areas of the city that the Collaboratives continue to target.

Our response as a city continues to be too fragmented and siloed. As the Inspector General's report on the events relating to the tragic deaths of the Jacks/Fogle children released just yesterday concluded,

“Multiple entities worked effectively, but largely obliviously to each other's efforts, to put in place many of the elements necessary for the Jacks/Fogle family to sustain itself. Yet, no single organization seemingly had the full perspective necessary to see and follow the family's progress, and intervene when these elements of self-sufficiency began to destabilize. Our analysis of the totality of actions in this case results in a single overarching finding: segments of the District's loosely connected social help network function individually, often with significant success; however, when the segments act in isolation, unable to coordinate effectively with the efforts of other helping hands and unaware of the necessity to do so, the effects of errors and omissions are amplified.

We continue to urge this committee, with its broad oversight responsibilities, to guide the development of a more seamless system of supports for at-risk families. As always, the Collaboratives and the Collaborative Council will contribute to this effort in any way possible.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today.

Thomas Gore, Chair  
Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative

Jean Wilks, Chair  
East River Family Strengthening Collaborative

Warren Easley, Chair  
South Washington/West of the River Family Strengthening Collaborative

Therman Walker, Chair  
North Capitol Collaborative