

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 14-41

SB25

House	5039-5052	14
Senate	1400-1446, 2460-2464	52
Appropriations	1604-1605, 1657-1659, 1794-1795, 1816-1822	14
Education	7-8, 37-78, 104-113, (114- 115), 118-121, 124-132, 134, 150, 151-155, 157- 164, 174-218, 225, 228, <u>230, 239</u>	132

212

H – 1195

**CONNECTICUT
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**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
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4809– 5187**

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

466
May 2, 2014

Those voting Yea	142
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	9

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill as amended passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 479.

THE CLERK:

House Calendar 479, page 28, favorable report of the joint standing committee on Appropriations, Substitute Senate Bill 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you -- thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is on acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark, sir?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Yes, Mr. Speaker. The subject and substance of this bill obviously should feel familiar since it

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

467
May 2, 2014

relates closely to the bill we just passed. In fact, this would create the Office of Early Childhood, establish 1,000 early childhood slots, and also get the Smart Start program underway, a major ten-year initiative. Because we just amended the prior bill, it's appropriate that we amend this one as well. So in that spirit, the Clerk is in possession of LCO Number 5192. I ask the Clerk please call and I be given permission --

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The Chamber will stand at ease for a moment.

(Chamber at ease.)

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologizes. The Clerk is in possession of an amendment, LCO 4368, previously designated Senate "A". I ask that the Clerk please call and I be given permission to summarize.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

468
May 2, 2014

Will the Clerk please call LCO 4368 which has been previously designated Senate Amendment "A".

THE CLERK:

Senate Amendment "A", LCO 4368, introduced by Senator Williams, Senator Looney, Senator -- Representative Sharkey, and Representative Aresimowicz.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The gentleman has sought leave of the Chamber to summarize. Is there objection? Seeing none, you may proceed with summarization, sir.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So to try and clarify my remarks earlier, Senate Amendment "A" passed just the other day, includes materials that we just discussed. It establishes an Office of Early Childhood, it establishes the Governor's initiative to get us to universal preschool, and also puts in place the Smart Start program. Given that the amendment I passed with the full support of this Chamber on the previous bill, accomplished two of those three ends, what's appropriate for us to do is to adopt this amendment and then adopt a subsequent one. So I urge my colleagues to please join me in supporting this

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

469
May 2, 2014

amendment and then we will consider another
subsequently. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you. Would you move adoption, sir?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

I believe I did, but just to be clear I move
adoption.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir. The question before the Chamber
is adoption of Senate Amendment "A".

Will you remark?

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately when they
handed out the LCO Number it was 5192 and I was
reviewing that when I noticed it's a different one on
the board up there.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

That's correct. We're on Senate -- previously
designated Senate Amendment "A". I don't have that.
Just a technicality? Okay. I'll hold my comments
until --

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

470
May 2, 2014

Would you care to remark? Would you care to
remark further on Senate Amendment "A"?

If not, let me try your minds. All those in
favor of Senate Amendment "A", please signify by
saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Those opposed, nay.

The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted.

Would you care to remark further on the bill as
amended?

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Clerk
is in possession of another amendment, LCO Number
5192. I ask the Clerk please call and I be given
permission to summarize.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 5192 which will be
designated House Amendment "A".

THE CLERK:

House Amendment "A", LCO 5192, introduced by Representative Sharkey, Representative Aresimowicz, and Representative Fleischmann.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The gentleman has sought leave of the Chamber to summarize. Is there objection? Seeing none, you may proceed with summarization, sir.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So this amendment before us essentially takes what was a very large bill and makes it far slimmer. Since we've already in our prior bill established an Office of Early Childhood and supported the Governor's effort to move us to universal preschool, this is the Smart Start proposal. Essentially what it would establish is a major commitment to early childhood over the next decade, \$10 million a year in operational funding for preschool, \$10 million a year for support of capital programming. There would be \$75,000 available per classroom for the infrastructure improvements, \$75,000 per classroom available for operating costs, with no more than \$300,000 annually going to any given grant recipient.

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

472
May 2, 2014

This represents, in my view, a great way to build upon the measure that we just enacted. I urge adoption and urge all of my good colleagues to join me in adopting the measure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Would you care to remark further on the House Amendment "A"?

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and for your patience on my last so-called comments.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Not at all, sir.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Comments on House Amendment 5192, you know, this is as mentioned by the good chair probably would be great policy, sure it would be great policy. Many, many people are probably now hearing of these words, you might have heard them in the newspaper, if you sat on the Education Committee you know a little bit about it maybe from a discussion. But unlike that nice bill we just passed almost unanimously, this -- this is now coming to all of us now. And in the news it's a

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

473
May 2, 2014

concept, it doesn't go through the policy, the process that we, you know, we may beat up at time to time and try to tell our constituents about the process and their eyes glass over. But we have that, we value that because it brings all the stakeholders into the room to complement it, to negotiate against it, to try and stop it.

We do not know how this going to affect our board of eds, our local preschools because they haven't had a chance to chime in. We can get assurances, but we're not sure. We could say, well, you know, there's a grant process, you can buy into it, you can -- you can -- that's a competitive grant process that some communities will take advantage of and others might not get that shot. This is essentially, if you look at the value of early childhood, and everybody I believe in this room understands the -- the value of early childhood education and we strive to close the achievement gap.

And we know getting those youngsters in that are three and four years old, giving them that head start. We just passed a wonderful bill that's going to start to work on all of that in many of our districts that are in need. And then we have this one

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

474
May 2, 2014

that maybe will be something that we're going to marvel in the future or we're going to curse at in the future. So I struggle with this because I would have loved to have been part of it, like anyone in this room would have been. So would have all of our local preschools, so would have all our boards of ed that are going to have to deal with this because it adds another level of teachers that we probably would be in the process of getting certified teachers into that youngster's classrooms.

But can we afford it? Can we sustain it after we do a five-year grant program and then have to relook at it for those that have started it? I could go on and on. This probably would have been a five, six hour, seven hour public hearing on just this with everybody saying I want to sign on to it. But let's make it better. We don't have the chance to make it better. It's in front of us now and we need to decide how we want to vote on it. It's hard to say I'm going against something that deals with, you know, our children and their education. But I'll sit here and listen to any other comments, but unlike that last bill that we all can support, this may not get all the

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

475
May 2, 2014

support that that one did. I thank you, Mr. Speaker,
for the time.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Would you care to remark further on House
Amendment "A"?

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question, through you,
to the chairman of the Education Committee.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, if this bill passes, is
this amendment, through you, Mr. Speaker, the bill?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

476
May 2, 2014

Through you, Mr. Speaker. Did this amendment soon to be bill have a public hearing? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Cafero -- I'm sorry.

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Ladies and gentlemen, I think we all know what we're doing here, and I will make these concluding remarks. As Representative Ackert indicated, for years we at least all of last year and this year, we studied this issue, we had bills that were raised at public hearings, public input on it. This bill did not. It came rather rapidly. It is now before us. My concern is always with the process and I am very concerned about the process with regard to this amendment which will soon become the bill if passed. Those are my comments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

477
May 2, 2014

Would you care to remark? Would you care to
remark further on the -- on the amendment, House
Amendment "A"?

If not, let me try your minds. All those in
favor of House Amendment "A", please signify by saying
aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Those opposed, nay.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Nay.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The ayes have it, the amendment is adopted.

Would you care to remark further on the bill as
amended? Would you care to remark further on the bill
as amended?

Representative Belsito.

REP. BELSITO (53rd):

I want to thank everybody for voting yea on that
bill because it's going to put all of the preschool
people out of work and we're going to add a bunch of
new teachers to our schools that's going to cause the
schools costs to go way up even though they say we're

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

478
May 2, 2014

going to fund it through the federal government. I don't know where this bill came from, but it came from overnight and that's not the way this House is supposed to work or this government. So we have a flawed bill, one that you can all be proud of when all the preschools go out of business, all those people are laid off, and they're -- they're out of jobs. So you can be proud of yourself for voting yes. Thank you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Would you care to remark? Would you care to remark further on the bill as amended? Would you care to remark further on the bill as amended?

If not, staff and guests to the well of the House, members take your seats, the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representative is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please return to the Chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted? Will the members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast. If all the members have

vd/mr/ch/gm/jf/cd
 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

479
 May 2, 2014

voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 25 as amended by Senate "A" and by House "A".

Total number voting	140
Necessary for passage	71
Those voting Yea	79
Those voting Nay	61
Those absent and not voting	11

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill as amended passes not in concurrence with the Senate.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 191.

THE CLERK:

Mr. Speaker, on page 6, House Calendar 191, favorable report of the joint standing committee on Education, House Bill 5559, AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIFORM REGIONAL SCHOOL CALENDAR.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

S - 673

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL. 57
PART 5
1340 – 1655**

Then, Madam President, I move that all items on Senate Agendas Numbers Two and Three, dated Friday, April 25, 2014, be acted up on as indicated and that the agendas be incorporated by reference in the Senate Journal and the Senate transcript.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I would also move for suspension for immediate transmittal to the House of Representatives of all of the judicial nominations acted upon thus far in today's session.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you. Thank you, Madam President.

Now, Madam President, returning to the Calendar, I would ask that the Clerk call as the next item, from Calendar page 33, under matters returned from Committee, Calendar Number 278, Senate Bill Number 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 33, Calendar 278, substitute for Senate Bill Number 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD,
Favorable Report of the Committee on Education and Public -
- Education and there are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman, good -- almost good evening, ma'am.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Good afternoon -- evening, to you, Madam President.

I move the Judiciary Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on passage and -- adoption and passage. Please remark.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, we have before the circle today an opportunity to pass a -- a comprehensive bill that really does -- really does carry the children of the state on the road to high quality preschool education. I know we talk -- we've talked about it quite a bit here in Connecticut, as we do throughout the country, and this proposal today will provide a great opportunity to -- to move this issue forward.

With that, Madam President, I do have an amendment. I would like to call LCO Number 4368 and that I be allowed to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4368, Senate Amendment Schedule "A" offered by Senator Williams, Looney, et al.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

I move adoption of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on adoption.

Will you remark?

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes. Thank you very much.

As I was stating, we have a great opportunity here to provide the best education for our children. This amendment that's before us and I will explain in a moment is a strike all amendment, so it becomes the bill if -- because I am very hopeful that this bill will move forward and we will have that opportunity to prepare our children for a very -- for the best future that we can.

This bill actually has in a sense three components. It has the establish of the Office of Early Childhood, which, unfortunately, we could not adopt that bill last year due to some last minute glitches in the schedule. And in the interim, the Governor established the office through executive order. So the office is up and running, but what this bill will do is actually give better definition to that office.

The other parts of the bill have to do with how do we pay for it? And by moving towards universal -- universal preschool education, high quality preschool education, in Connecticut, we obviously need resources.

So the other two parts of the bill provide those resources and that opportunity for the office to help develop those high quality programs.

The -- the other two aspects include the Governor's proposal of funding for 4,000 slots and the proposal that has been talked about and presented by Senator Williams and members of the Senate and the House at a press conference a couple of weeks ago.

And so that includes that proposal, which is called -- we've been calling it Smart Start, and it really is a smart start for our children. With that, just a quick overview of this -- of the bill.

It not just establishes the office and assigns duties to the office, such as making sure that they can provide service to the state and provide services to young children and their families, we need to establish information systems evaluating early childhood programs and services. We need to collaborate with groups and stakeholders locally.

It also transfers to the Office of Early Childhood programs that have been overseen by other agencies. This is an -- a great opportunity to put those services under one roof and those are the School Readiness Program; the Children's Trust Fund; the Connecticut Charts a Course, which is important for professional development; the Care For Kids, which is a -- a daycare subsidy; other child daycare services in DSS; and child daycare facilities of licensing and inspection.

It also will provide -- the office will be able to develop grants and award them and there are changes in this bill that were part of Senate Bill 25 and the original bill to establish the office, which changes some organizations and memberships of certain counsel, such as the Head Start Advisory Committee, local school readiness counsels, and the Early Childhood Cabinet.

Some of the -- the newer aspects of this bill give us an opportunity to -- to clarify some of the changes that the new commission of OEC must develop. It -- the bill also expands the competitive grant programs for school readiness, which allows Alliance District towns that do not contain priority school districts to apply for competitive school readiness grants. It allows grant recipients to use funds to purchase seats and program as they -- as they seek accreditation.

So we're -- we're sort of working through this together and the state's going to help -- help those programs receive that accreditation and, in the mean time, they can apply for those grants.

The bill also requires OEC rather than Department of Public Health, to license and inspect daycare centers, group homes, family homes, and most importantly, which we speak of frequently here in the Legislature, it increases the frequency of unannounced inspections and visits to those facilities.

The bill also allows the Office of Early Childhood to enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Public Health so that they can work through this transition and -- in terms of the responsibilities from Public Health going over to the Office of Early Childcare.

The bill also creates the Smart Start competitive grant program and what that program will do is reimburse local and regional boards of education for capital and operating expenses related to expanding or establishing a preschool program located in a public school.

It will provide capital grants of up to \$75,000 per classroom if they need to be renovated or to expand a building. And operating grants for -- annually for up to five years and can be renewed for another five years of \$5,000 per child served, \$75,000 per classroom, and an annual operating grant maximum of \$300,000 per district.

The bill, as I said, gives us great opportunity to -- to move forward. I'm honored to -- to be in the position as the Chair -- Senate "C"hair of the Education Committee to bring this bill forward, to have worked on this initiative.

I thank Senator Williams for his vision in terms of working so closely with the Committee for the last few years and helping us as we -- we've been crafting legislation through the years on -- on not just preschool, but other educational programs.

As I said, it's a very comprehensive bill. I believe that it's the best route for the children of the State of Connecticut so that we can provide a K through 12 educational experience for -- for children that has prepared them well so when they go to kindergarten, they have that opportunity -- excuse me.

When they go to kindergarten, they are prepared to address a curriculum in kindergarten, which is very different from a curriculum that my children had in kindergarten, let alone myself.

Kindergarten isn't what it used to be. It's not about nap time and playing games, although children playing is an educational experience that -- we all know that's very

important, but it does give a little more teeth to the program, kindergarten, than -- than it did years ago.

Because we know how important it is for those minds, which we know are like, we talk about it frequently, little sponges that are just absorbing all that information we can put in front of them, all the challenges they will have an opportunity to -- to have before them, those opportunities that are just so very important for their future.

So I thank so many folks who have worked on this. I hope to have an opportunity to speak some more about the bill. I thank the Governor for his vision of universal childcare as well. And I certainly urge passage of the bill.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I also rise to support this amendment and the bill that we have before us and also thank the leaders of the Education Committee and Senator Beth Bye, as well, for discussing, maybe -- the one maybe minor concern I had about a survey that was developed that included a great bit of personal data and information, making sure that there was a voluntary aspect to that particular survey, and it wouldn't preclude any family from applying for kindergarten.

So I do appreciate that as -- that I believe is a part of the bill that was put in here. And I do believe that the -- the distinguished Chair of the Education Committee detailed the actual components of the bill before us very, very well.

But I just wanted to say a few words to put the whole issue in context and why it is so important and -- and I think

embraced by individuals of any side of the aisle and hopefully in understanding within our society about how important it is to invest dollars in this area.

And particularly, I want to mention that our Commission on Children has done quite a bit of work over the many years trying to bring to us good data and research that talk about the developing brain and why it's so important to concentrate on early childhood.

They have brought information to us that talks about how the human brain begins forming at a very early stage of life. In fact, in prenatal life, just three weeks after conception. But, in many ways, brain development is really a lifelong project. That's because the same events that shape the brain during development are also responsible for storing information, new skills, and memories throughout our life.

The major difference, though, between brain development in a child versus an adult is the matter of degree. The brain is far more impressionable, we know that, as children. Neuroscientists use the word plastic. In early life, then it is immaturity. This plasticity is both a positive and a negative side effect.

On the very positive side, we all recognize it means that young children's brain are more open to learning and enriching influences. But on the negative side, it also means that young children's brains are more vulnerable to developmental problems should their environment prove especially impoverished or un-nurturing, and that is why an investment at this early age is so important.

And this has been really recently documented by a couple of experts, one an economist from the University of Pennsylvania, and another Nobel laureate at the University of Chicago that actually documented this in an experiment to talk about public policy and investing in preschool. They conducted a research project through what they called the Perry School Experiment.

And they took 123 low-income children from Michigan who had an IQ of between 75 and 85. And what they did when the children were three years old is they randomly selected them and put them in two different control groups, one with

a very quality preschool education and another that received no preschool education at all.

They were tracked, in fact, over the ensuing decades, with the most recent analysis comparing the groups at age 40. I think this is very interesting. The differences, even decades after the intervention, were very stark.

The adults assigned to the preschool program were 20 percent more likely to have graduated from high school and 19 percent less likely to have been arrested more than five times. They got better grades and more likely to be -- remain married, believe it or not. And also, less dependent on social welfare programs.

They also saw something that was non-cognitive, and that is really particularly interesting, such as self-control, persistence, and grit, which really spoke to the face that this dependability trait is something that's most valued by employers. Perseverance, dependability, and consistency are the most important predictors of even good grades in school.

So although if preschool doesn't necessarily make us all that much smarter, it certainly can make us a better person and obviously more successful in life. Furthermore, the gains from preschool appear to be so significant and consistent that according to these two experts, investing in early childhood education is about the most cost-effective way to spend public money and they cite, in fact, for every dollar invested in preschool for at-risk children, society at large can regain anywhere between eight and nine dollars in return.

So for those individuals that like things documented, that like to have data and statistics and numbers, I think they can see that this is a very good investment indeed. It's certainly the way I would like to see are state monies spent. I believe the taxpayer also would like to see a strong return for the dollars we spend, and that is why the efforts in this area should receive good bipartisan support.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Bye.

SENATOR BYE:

Good afternoon -- good evening, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

.. Good evening.

SENATOR BYE:

How are you today?

THE CHAIR:

Fine. Yourself, ma'am?

SENATOR BYE:

I -- I just -- I rise in strong support of this bill and thank Senator Boucher for her comments and thank Senator Stillman for bringing it out and Senator Williams for his leadership. And I -- I will now allow Senator Witkos was wanting to speak, so I will yield the floor to him. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos, will you accept the yield? Would you like me to call on somebody else? Okay. At this time -- okay. Senator Linares. I guess you just got pointed to.

SENATOR LINARES:

Thank you, Madam President.

I rise to raise an amendment. Would --

THE CHAIR:

Senator Linares, we are on Senate "A". It has not been adopted yet, so we'd have to vote to adopt it too.

SENATOR LINARES:

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Okay?

SENATOR LINARES:

Thank you, Madam President. Appreciate it.

THE CHAIR:

Okay.

Will you remark further on Senate?

Will you -- Senator Stillman for the second time.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes. Thank you, Madam President.

I -- I was remiss before in not thanking a couple of folks who've worked so hard on this bill and this amendment to bring us to this point. Not -- I mentioned Senator Williams and -- and the Governor for their leadership.

We have a -- a new Chair of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Bye, and this proposal today, many of you know that she, for I believe it's 30 years or so, was a -- and probably still is, because I don't think you ever stop being, involved in preschools, programs, and establishing quality childcare in her area.

And she's worked on this initiative for many years here in the Legislature. And so, I'm so pleased that this is here today so that she can be -- be part of seeing this coming to fruition.

Her leadership on the Appropriations, in so many ways that we're focusing on this bill right now, or this amendment, that's before us, is -- is greatly appreciated. She has worked very hard to help us to get to this point and we all know how important the Appropriations part of this bill is.

And I also want to thank Senator Boucher for her -- her kind words, her ability to work across the aisle, and it's been an honor to serve with her on the Committee and I -- I'm pleased she's here today to participate as well.

And also my co-chair, Representative Fleischman in the House, who will have the opportunity to -- hopefully to -- to follow through with a vote in the House next week.

But the bill sounds complicated, but it really isn't. It's good public policy in many ways. And again, I urge its adoption. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark on Senate "A"? Will you remark on Senate "A"?

All in favor -- then, I'll try your minds.

All in favor, Senate "A", please say Aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed.

Senate "A" passes.

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

Speaking on the bill as amended, so now we have -- as the bill moves forward, we have established the Office of Early Childhood and I believe there was something that was done last year or last session that moved us in this direction.

And I -- I don't believe there's any doubt that the sooner we can -- we can get to the minds of these young children, the better their -- they will be later on in life. I -- I

wholeheartedly believe that the sooner that young people get into some type of an educational environment, not only will they be better, but society will be better off because they're getting the attention that they so deserve at an earlier age.

Now, one of the things that I -- I've had issues with in -- in one of the districts that I represent, the eighth Senatorial District, had to do with education and it -- and it rose all the way to the Connecticut Supreme Court. And I want to talk a little bit about it until my amendment is prepared, then I'll -- I'll call the amendments. So kind of bear with me, if you would, please.

Sheff versus O'Neill, and I'm sure we're all familiar with that landmark case in the State of Connecticut, and that actually was based off of another case, Horton versus Meskill.

In both of those cases -- Horton versus Meskill was -- the plaintiff was from the town of Canton, my hometown -- and I will say just as a -- a side note, that I -- somebody told me today, hey, congratulations, Senator. Your school was rated out -- I think number four of the top ten high schools in the State of Connecticut.

So I want to send some kudos and some praise out to all the hardworking educators and administrators and professionals, and to the students at Canton High School for their performance. It's so duly noted.

But anyways, going back the Horton versus Meskill case, Barnaby Horton had filed a -- a claim that he didn't believe that the students were receiving a -- an equal education. And from that, that's where the Sheff versus O'Neill case was on, that the students in Hartford were not receiving, because of the location of where they resided, an equal educational opportunity to those in surrounding communities.

And so the courts declared that there are certain communities within identified as the Sheff region that they need to help diversify the Hartford school -- Public school systems in order to provide for an equal quality education for all students.

And so how do you do that? Well, that came upon many different mechanisms. I -- I know when I was in high school it was called open choice. And so that would be that students from the school districts in Hartford would come out to the suburban school districts and they would be enrolled in -- in those school districts and it was a very successful program.

And in fact, to this day, it still remains a very successful program and there are thousands of students that come out to all of the school districts, I believe, in the Hartford-Sheff region. And I believe that there are 18 communities in the Sheff region towns.

And so while one of the other things that -- the -- the State had gone back to court, asking if we can settle the case, but the plaintiffs said no. We don't believe that adequate progress has been made. According to the demographics and the -- and the Hartford public school systems, looking at the grades, no, we will not accept that.

So born from that were charter schools and we currently have, I believe, 18 charter schools that have been built in and around the Hartford region and the Sheff region. And those magnet schools, or charter schools -- magnet schools have been to the tune of tens of millions of dollars.

And to this day, that impacts not only the students that attend those schools, but also the local school districts as well because sometimes the local boards of education don't know that those students have been accepted and they don't need notification.

A parent can apply, whether it's through a lottery system or whether it's through some type of an enrollment process. They're in it and the -- the Board of Education gets the bill.

So to this day, we have a process where tax payers throughout the State of Connecticut have funded education to try to meet the requirements of this lawsuit, Sheff versus O'Neill. And plaintiffs still refuse to come to court to sign off on the progress that we've -- we've made.

So when the amendment's called -- I'm going to explain the amendment now and then we'll just go through it, save some

time. The amendment says that, from what Senator Stillman had explained in the bill, that there is a -- a review process and the Office of Early Childhood Education will assess points on the -- the districts, if they'll be eligible for the grants.

And so if the -- part of the -- what I'm trying to establish is part of the review process that if you are a town located in the Sheff region, you'll get additional points for that. Because we still haven't met our goal of equalizing the educational opportunities for those students in Hartford and when will this case ever go -- go -- be rested?

And so we should make, as the Policy Board, every opportunity available to those communities to hopefully reach a successful conclusion. And if we're starting a new program in the State of Connecticut and we -- we all honestly believe that early childhood education is the way to go to help these students receive a quality education, then shouldn't we go to this -- the -- the source where -- of these towns, give them so additional points if they are a town that is part of this state lawsuit?

And at this time, the amendment has arrived in my hands, Madam President. So if the Clerk wouldn't mind calling LCO Number 4380 and I be allowed to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk. Hold on.

Senator, we have to stand at ease a moment. The Clerk has not received the -- the bill -- the amendment. They're going down to get it right now.

(Chamber at ease.)

THE CHAIR:

Okay. Come on through. The Senate will come back to order.

Mr. Clerk, will you now call Senate Amendment "B".

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4380, Senate Amendment Schedule "B", offered by
Senator Witkos.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on adoption.

Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR WITKOS:

Yes. Thank you, Madam President.

Ladies and gentlemen of the circle, now that I have it in front of me, I can speak a little bit more clearer to it. So when the Office of Childhood Education has to determine whether or not a local Board of Education can avail itself to such a program, it looks at several different things; a program that has demonstrated the greatest need for the establishment or expansion of this preschool program, whether the plan allocates at least 60 percent of the space in such a program for the children, or members of families that are at or below 75 percent of the state median income. So it takes into consideration your -- the level of your income.

And what I've asked is to add in those that are located in the Sheff region. So that would have a priority and when the Office of Early Childhood Education determines whether a program would receive these pilot funds. And I ask the Chamber's adoption of the amendment. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark?

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Senator Witkos for your amendment that is before us and your concern about the children in the Sheff region and obviously throughout the state, because I know that is something that you are always thinking about, certainly in -- here in the Legislature with the programs.

I -- I rise in opposition to the amendment for several reasons. The first being that, as you -- as you stated, the criteria -- one of the criterias -- several of the criteria's are that at least 60 percent of the spaces in such preschool programs to children who are members of families that are 75 percent of the state median of income or 50 percent of the space is in such preschool program to children who are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch. And then, you're adding the Sheff region in.

The purpose of this Smart Start initiative is to address the unmet need. Now, in the Sheff region, as -- as you know, you -- you mentioned the charter schools that have -- they have preschool. The magnets have -- have preschool. And the fact that they are already meeting the needs in the Sheff region for preschool, I -- I believe that, in all due respect, and your amendment is well-intentioned, that this particular amendment is unnecessary because the -- the need is already being met in the region and I think they would have difficulty proving that there is an unmet need.

So with that, I -- I urge rejection of the amendment and that I ask that when the vote is taken, it be taken by roll. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

A roll call vote would be taken.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Good evening, Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO:

Good evening, Madam President.

Madam President, I rise in -- rise in support of the amendment. Madam President, we spent a lot of money on the Sheff-O'Neill case. We spent an awful lot of money. And every year, for the past 20 years, we've been -- we have not been able to solve the issue. And every year, it comes back to the Legislature to do another thing to improve the education in this area.

Madam President, if we believe that primary education, pre-K education, is so important, then I would believe that we need to emphasize those areas in which we lack the education standards. And if we put the resources in there first, we're going to save the state money because if we start today with that emphasize, we're not going to have to worry about the Sheff-O'Neill cases ten years from now because we've given the proper education at the time that all the experts say it's important.

What this bill speaks to is pre-education, pre-K classes, being important; getting education to kids early. And the spirit and the intent of this bill is well-founded in the -- the statistics and the research that says the earlier, the better.

So if that's what you believe and -- and that's why this bill is in front of us and we have the Sheff-O'Neill problem where every year we don't reach the standards and we dump money into it, one can suggest by making that area a high priority area, you're going to solve your money problem because you're putting it in the right area, which is in education at the earliest age.

I think the -- the amendment makes sense. It's not forcing us to do something we shouldn't be doing. It is consistent with -- with what this Legislature started back when it got the decision of the Sheff-O'Neill case. This is logical. I believe the amendment makes a lot of sense for us to go forward. It will save the state money. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote on Senate Amendment "B".

The machine is open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call on Senate "B" has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, if all members have voted, the machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Amendment Schedule "B".

Total number voting	33
Those voting Yea	12
Those voting Nay	21
Absent and not voting	3

THE CHAIR:

The amendment fails.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Linares. Good evening, sir.

SENATOR LINARES:

Thank you, Madam President.

I rise for purpose of an amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR LINARES:

The Clerk is in possession of LCO 4381. I ask that the Clerk please call the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Mister.

SENATOR LINARES:

Yeah. And that I have permission to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4381, Senate "C", offered by Senator Linares.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Linares.

SENATOR LINARES:

I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on adoption.

Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR LINARES:

Madam President, this amendment would allow private schools to be able to apply for the grants in the Smart Start program and under this amendment, supervisory agent of a non-public school would be an eligible applicant. This amendment, the idea for this amendment, came to me after touring the Children's Tree Montessori School in Old Saybrook, which, I believe Senator Stillman and I, we share that district and I -- I believe that's actually in Senator Stillman's district.

I was very impressed with this preschool and -- and their program. Marci Martindale runs that program and she has done an excellent job providing the best quality education to three to six-year-olds in Old Saybrook and in the surrounding towns.

So I ask that the Chamber allow preschools to access these grants because I think it will encourage competition and competition will breed improvement in our education system. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Thank you, Senator. Will you remark? Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President. Yes, I would like to respond to the amendment that is before us and I -- and I understand the -- the concern that's been raised about private preschool programs and the amendment that is before us, you know, appropriately raises that issue. But it's one that I believe -- as I speak against the amendment, it's one that I believe is really unnecessary.

The bill that's before us focuses on our traditional public schools, which have, as we know, for many years, because we -- we're here and we're always fighting for ECS money and everything else to go into our districts. But our traditional public schools have sadly not gotten additional support from the state for preschool initiatives, but yet, we do seem to understand that charters and magnets can receive those resources.

This initiative encourages our public schools so that they can become involved in helping to close the achievement gap. And I know that those children who take -- who are fortunate enough to take advantage of those private opportunities for pre-K are also learning and being prepared for their future.

But I think we -- what I know -- we have to keep in mind, that private schools can currently compete for school readiness funds and the program for school readiness dollars in this state provides \$81.5 million for all types of programs who meet the criteria for school readiness.

The bill that's in front of us, the -- addresses a very small portion of that and yet we know that our public schools can spend that money wisely with the guidance of the Office of Early Childhood. For those reasons, I urge rejection of the amendment and ask for a roll call vote when the vote is taken. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Roll call will -- will be had. Will you remark? Will you remark? Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President. I also rise in -- in support of the amendment. You know, while the -- the public schools do not receive direct dollars for an early childhood education program and the charter-magnets do, those are state dollars -- taxpayer dollars, just like the ECS money that we -- we send to our -- our local districts. That's -- that's taxpayer dollars, just like schools are funded through taxpayer dollars. When you get your property tax, you pay it and your town turns around and decides what your boards of -- Board of Education or regional Board of Education budget is.

That's not the same for the private schools. They don't get money from their -- their communities. They get it from tuition. And -- and why should we, if we're concerned about general education, why should we pick the winners and losers for these children and why shouldn't we give these families another opportunity to choose from to say that's probably the best place where I want to send my son or daughter to get the education that I think they need and that they deserve?

When we went down the road with Project Choice, we gave the parents a decision. We said, you can choose from a litany of schools if they have space available. We didn't say you can only send it to this school or to that school. That's what we're saying here and -- with -- if -- if we reject this amendment, we're saying no. Those schools are not applicable. You raise your own money and you send your -- your son or daughter there.

But is that -- but that's not -- if we're talking about fairness, that's not being fair to the families who we can have a drastic impact on these students' lives by allowing them in some cases to go to these schools. Imagine if you were a family that you had the wherewithal to send an older sibling to that school, but yet, due to the cost of the -- of the private school, you just didn't have the funds to send the next sibling, the younger brother or sister. So they have to go some place else, or they sit out because they can't -- the family can't afford it.

But yet, if we allow this amendment to pass, there may be funds available, especially if that family is -- falls within the parameters that are established already. If they have the ability and they're in the 75 percent of the state median income and they want to take the hard earned money that they have just to send their kids to a private school, why should we tell them they don't have that opportunity because they're barely making it? Let's make these schools available to these families.

So let them choose what's best for their -- for their son or daughter. I don't think that's the state's role. And I strongly support the amendment. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark?

Senator McLachlan.

SENATOR MCLACHLAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

I stand in support of the amendment and I applaud Senator Linares for highlighting a school in his district that has worked so well educating the young children of southern Connecticut. You know, there are a number of similar stories in western Connecticut that I believe would be benefit from the funds made available should this amendment pass.

I've spoken to the professionals in this area of education in western Connecticut and they are all telling me the same thing, that they're very concerned that this idea is sort of come at the eleventh hour of the Legislative session without some full discussion on the matter, perhaps even a full public hearing on the matter.

The -- the goal is laudable. The idea is terrific. But it does seem to be moving much too quickly and setting aside all of these other terrific educational institutions like those that were described by Senator Linares. I urge adoption of this amendment. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote on Senate "C".

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call on Senate "C" has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted, the machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On Senate Amendment Schedule "C".

Total number voting	34
Those voting Yea	12
Those voting Nay	22
Absent and not voting	2

THE CHAIR:

The amendment fails.

Will you remark further? Will you remark further?

Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, this bill does speak to the fact that we need do an early childhood development program and I think that is important. And in the bill, it talks about promises. It talks about we're going to set a grant system for five years and then see what happens after the five years.

We make promises of money and promises of rewards if you comply with certain programs and then at the end of the day, we don't carry out those promises for one reason or the other. We're diverted and we left -- we leave the municipalities holding the bag.

Madam President, you don't have to look far to see those situations, whether it's pilot money for our hospitals or pilot money for our state property or pilot money for our schools. It doesn't matter. And in this case, on ECS, we are talking about the schools.

Madam President, we don't fund ECS enough. We all know that. In fact, we only fund it to a tune of 80 percent. Just recently, in East Windsor, the other day, a budget which passed, which ends up cutting 21 school staffers out of a job simply because the education part of the budget doesn't have enough money. Why? Because we only fund at 80 percent, leaving it \$30 million short.

Our response? We're going to give you another handout. We're only going to guarantee for five years and maybe we're going to fulfill it.

Madam President, I have an idea and my idea is before we give another handout, before we do another bonding package, before we take revenue from tobacco funds to fund this project, why don't we first commit to fully funding the ECS?

Why don't we first commit to putting 100 percent of the funds that we promised many years ago into ECS and maybe once we do that, we can embark upon other challenges, like this, which are definitely needed and warranted?

With that, Madam President, I would ask the Clerk to call LCO 4377.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4377, Senate "D", offered by Senators Fasano and Witkos.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, when I said ECS, I mean excess cost sharing, if I may. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, what this bill says.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fasano, were you done?

SENATOR FASANO:

I would move the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Move to adopt the amendment.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on adoption. Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you, Madam President.

What this bill does is say before the law is effective, the effective date is changed to say that it shall -- after we fund the excess cost grant to towns pursuant to Section 10-76(g) of Connecticut General Statutes, the bill is ineffective.

So basically, Madam President, it says first we have to keep our obligations and then once we keep our obligations on the excess cost sharing, then we will be able to continue on with this type of project.

Madam President, this is crucial to our continued promises to municipalities and if we want to -- to have them embark on such a mission and we want them to take on this obligation, then we should ensure that we've completed our other promises first.

Madam President, this will -- this Legislature can make this happen by passing this amendment. We can't fulfill our obligations and then go forward with this bill. Madam President, I look for adoption of the circle. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

I rise in opposition to the amendment, although I must say it -- it's -- it's a difficult opposition because I understand the frustration that we all, you know, we all are -- are saddled with here in the Legislature as we try to balance everything.

The proposal that's before us is one of -- of addressing preschool opportunities for our children, quality pre-K, so

that they can be prepared to go into the public schools. You know, I -- I wish we could fully fund every single pilot in this state, but we don't, and -- and I know we -- there have been many discussions in the Appropriations Committee about that.

But I think that to put this initiative off rather than to have this pre-K initiative move forward as quickly as possible I think does a disservice to our -- to our children. And -- and granted, you could say that our public schools are being -- are not being served appropriately because of the -- the lack of state dollars that are going there.

But in this particular case, I must say that I -- I do rise in opposition to the amendment and when the vote's taken, I urge that it be taken by roll. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Roll call vote will be taken.

Will you remark further?

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

I rise in support of the amendment. When Senator Fasano spoke about the excess cost sharing, that's something that decimates local education budgets. The -- and the state is \$30 million behind in funding its share and that is after the local Board of Education has already paid four times the cost of a regular education for these students.

So let's put things in perspective. If the cost of educating a student in the district is \$10,000, the -- the state doesn't kick in a penny until the local Board of Education has paid \$40,000 for that excess cost.

And we haven't met our obligation because we're \$30 million behind, but yet we feel the need in this Chamber to start another program that's -- and we're only promising that for five years. After five years, well, you might be able to reapply for the funds.

And when a program gets started, you all know it's very difficult to do away with it. And when we're talking about programs, how do you think the impact of 21 people in a school district -- just recently, as Senator from the 34th District spoke about in the town of East Windsor, that's going to have an impact on all the students in that school, whether it's a paraprofessional, long-term substitutes, somebody in the main office.

If you've been in an elementary school, you know it's chaos there in the morning with the attendants and the kids running around and trying to figure out what -- what's happening, who's in school, who's not, who's monitoring the playgrounds, who's monitoring the -- the buses.

Twenty-one people had to let go because of four special education students that weren't counted for because nobody knows when people are moving in or out of the districts. They show up and we have an obligation to educate these students and we should.

But if we have laws in place that says we're going to pay for that education, as long as you, the local districts, pay four times the amount, we have to live up to our obligation and we're not.

And then, it's a shame to say, well, we need to move forward with this early childhood education. It's a shame if we don't start this pilot program. But not everybody in the state is going to be eligible. But every school district in the state, every single one of the 166 school districts in the state, has a special education student. Every single one. But not every single school district is going to be benefitted by the -- the bill that's before us.

And we're talking about three and four-year-olds. Let's put that in perspective. A lot of the local early childhood education, they have kindergarten. I think every school has at least a half-day kindergarten program, if not more moving towards a full-day kindergarten program.

And you ask the towns why haven't you moved towards a full-day kindergarten? Because the towns can't afford it or there's no room available because the school buildings aren't big enough. But yet, we're -- we're seeing enrollment on the decline.

Ask a demographer. Some parts of our state, you have the -
- the population's increasing, but most are decreasing and
people are having discussions about how do we close a
school? Heaven forbid if you have three elementary schools
and you have to pick one to close.

Every single one of those parents that are in that
elementary school don't want to see it closed. That's why
I don't think in five years from now, whoever has this
program is going to expect it to continue and that means
it's a forever funding source.

So I think we ought to meet the current obligations that we
have before we start taking on new obligations. Let's deal
with the students who we know already. A little extra
attention to these students, whatever their -- their needs
are, through their IEP, provide them the opportunity,
whether it's speech and language or assisted -- one-on-one
paraprofessional in the classroom to help these kids
succeed.

Because we already know -- they've been identified. They're
having problems and we owe them before we start looking out
to a new branch of three and four-year-olds to say let's
start a program. Let's take care of the ones that we know
definitely need the help.

Thank you, Madam President. I'm supporting the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you very much.

Will you remark?

Senator McLachlan.

SENATOR MCLACHLAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

I stand in firm support of the amendment. Thank you to
Senator Fasano for raising the issue. And just a -- a
brief comment -- and thanks also to Senator Witkos, who
brought up the points exactly that I was very concerned

about, that we have current programs, current law, that we are not honoring and we should be.

But it's not just us here in the circle and certainly in the Republican Caucus within the State Senate that's concerned about this. Connecticut has a history of a problem with education funding. Sheff versus O'Neill, a -- a monumental lawsuit against the State of Connecticut, as many of us are familiar with, is one case, and we have one pending now.

Connecticut Coalition For Justice and Education Funding versus Rell, which started back, I believe, in 2005; another indication that the Legislature's policy for education funding is broken. But we're piling on. We're -- I -- I think that this program that is before us today is really piling on the inequities.

Not only are we limiting this to public schools, we are -- we are excluding successful programs across the State of Connecticut in the private sector that are -- that are private businesses and that are -- that are private schools, both Catholic and -- and non-religious private schools, that are successfully educating the children of this age group and yet they are eliminating in this underlying bill.

So once again, we need to take pause. The underlying bill is a great idea, but when is this Legislature going to understand we're broke and still spending money like drunken sailors? You're borrowing money to pay light bills. You're taking money that was part of a -- a monumental lawsuit to educate our children to stop smoking to do this program. When are we going to get it?

We have to honor the laws on the books. If ECS is not working, which every superintendent, every board of ed chair, every board of ed member, every chief elected official in the State of Connecticut, probably every teacher in Connecticut would tell you that ECS is broken. And you're piling on a new program that local municipalities are going to have to pay for, because that's what happens. We all know that.

See, it's a short-term answer. Senator Fasano's amendment is fix the problem first. Let's -- let's dig in and find out where our problem is in education funding. If the

dollars that can come to local municipalities with this amendment are going to increase the bottom line to the local municipality's education budget and translate into local property tax relief, imagine what the voters would think about that.

Senator Fasano has really hit perfectly with this proposal and I endorse it enthusiastically and encourage and urge adoption. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Mr. Clerk, will you please call for a roll call vote and the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call on Senate "D" has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted, the machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally, please.

THE CLERK:

On Senate Amendment Schedule "D".

Total number voting	34
Those voting Yea	13
Those voting Nay	21
Absent and not voting	2

THE CHAIR:

The amendment fails.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I rise for purposes of an amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

I think the Clerk is in possession of LCO Number 4388. Can I ask that he call the amendment?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4388, Senate "E", offered by Senator McKinney.

THE CHAIR:

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President. I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

The motion is on adoption.

Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if I could in explaining this amendment, I just would like to ask one question for clarification

regarding the amendment to the -- Senator Stillman.
Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you. Senator Stillman, in -- in Section 6 of the underlying bill, if I could bring your attention. Section six, which is effective July 2014 requires the Office of Early Childhood to develop in consultation with the Department of Education a plan for changing the date, essentially the kindergarten start date.

And as I read the underlying bill, it would require the plan to prepare for a kindergarten start date where any child who attains the again of five by October 1 shall be enrolled in kindergarten. Any child who is not five by October 1, would be in kindergarten the year after.

And through you, Madam President, is that the correct reading of Section 6?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you to Senator McKinney, that is correct. The section requires that the Office of Early Childhood develop a plan for that to happen so that we can move towards and October 1 birthdate before a child can enter kindergarten.

THE CHAIR:

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President, and -- and hopefully, my last question, Senator Stillman. Under Section 6, that plan is required to be returned to the Legislature no later than June 30, 2015. But as I read this, if the Legislature were

not to act on that plan or any other plan, then the kindergarten date would not change. Is that correct, through you, Madam President?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Through you, Madam President, I believe that is correct, but it is certainly my hope -- I won't be here then, but it's certainly my hope that I can read in the newspaper that the -- the Legislature, specifically the Education Committee, will move forward with a plan that the office will place in front of them.

THE CHAIR:

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Senator Stillman. Madam President, I thank Senator Stillman for answering those two questions. First, let me state that I know and appreciate and respect the fact that Senator Stillman has long believed we need a date certain for kindergarten starts. Current law allows parents to choose if their child is born between September 1 and December 31.

And -- and while I appreciate her work on this and while I am to see this language, this, too, is my last session in the State Senate and I would love to see us make a decision to guarantee that we can change the start date. I am the parent of three kids. My middle daughter is -- was born on October 18, 1998.

So I have seen this firsthand. It's not right for our -- especially our youngest kids to be in a classroom where someone can be as old as 14, 15, 16 months older than them. That's the most extreme case, a September 1 and a December 31 birthday.

But -- but talk to kindergarten teachers. Talk -- talk to first grade teachers about what it's like to teach a classroom when you have kids that are a year or slightly

more older than other kid in the classroom and they will tell you that's not the most effective way to teach. Fast forward to high school, where my daughter is now 15. She's -- you know, she turned 15 this past October. Her friends had already turned 16.

There -- there are big differences in those ages at very young and at high school and it has an impact on our children as they go through their school system. And we've allowed that to happen.

And what happened in my situation is not being fully cognizant of what the kindergarten start dates were when our children were one and two years old, you start them in a preschool if you're able to do, in a two program and a three program, and all of a sudden, you've exhausted preschool and you go into kindergarten.

I think we can do better. I -- I know Senator Stillman's -- and -- and others who put this together, but I -- I happen to believe this was Senator Stillman's individual doing, I know her sincerity that this should happen. But the language doesn't guarantee that it will happen.

So the amendment that I am offering today says that they'll -- they're still going to develop a plan, they're still going to bring the plan forward to the Legislature, and that the Legislature still has an opportunity to act on that plan or any version of the plan they want to. But in no event would we have the law continue as it is past July of 2018.

So what this amendment would say is the underlying law still works and the Legislature can still act upon the plan or any version it wants, but if the Legislature doesn't act, then for the school year that starts July 2018, for kids starting kindergarten in September of 2018, they -- the age will be October 1. You will have to be five by October 1 of 2018 and if you turn after that date, you will be in kindergarten the year after.

And -- and the reason why I picked a date, 2018, four years away, is because I think it says to all of the parents out there of two year olds and three year olds and four year olds we're not going to interfere with what you've probably already planned as your childhood -- child's educational

development, for those who are fortunate enough to have preschool available to them especially.

But for a child who isn't born yet or is one years old, their course has not been set, so this gives them plenty of notice. Because as I've talked to a lot of parents who believe in changing the start date, many of them say, but wait a minute. You can't do it because I've already got my four-year-old in a program and he or she is set to go to kindergarten next year.

So this gives plenty of time for parents to understand what the rules are and when the start dates are. It does not -- it does not eliminate what is in the underlying bill. It just says, you know what? If the Legislature doesn't act by July 2018, that school year, we're going to make it a requirement that if -- if you turn five by October 1, you're in kindergarten. If you turn five on October 2 or after, you're in kindergarten the year later.

Madam President, that's a longer explanation than perhaps this needed, but I would -- I would hope for adoption to the amendment and -- and if not adopted, I'm going to hope that Senator Stillman's right. But Madam President, I would urge adoption of the amendment. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, sir. Will you remark? Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes. Thank you, Madam President. And in relationship to the amendment that's on the floor, I can -- I -- I will venture forth with some family history on this as well and some of it goes way back to me. I grew up in New York and when I -- and I have a birthday in the middle of January and I started school when I was four and a half. Now, maybe that accounts for the reason as to why I am today, but -- but the reality is that my parents thought I was mature enough to be in kindergarten.

Then, my son was born December 25. We were living in Connecticut and he went to the Connecticut schools and I -- I was surprised that the cut off date was January 1. We enrolled him -- my husband and I enrolled him in kindergarten, also at what most people would consider an

early age. Even though he had -- had friends whose children were being held back because their parents didn't think that their child was mature enough, I'm delighted to say that my son survived and he is doing very well in life.

But I also know that this is -- this is really a very big issue. I certainly don't mean to make light of it, but I'm sharing with you because we all have personal experiences. I am hesitant to put a finite date on this because we don't know what the Office of Early Childhood's research will show them in terms of making sure that there is still quality educational opportunity for children whose parents may have expected them to go to kindergarten. And we certainly know with all the full-day kindergarten, that when you have two parents working, it's helpful to have them both in -- in full-day school.

But I really don't want to hamstring the department in coming up with a date. I -- I certainly hope it would be sooner than what Senator McKinney might be suggesting or is suggesting in his amendment. I -- I have been, as he noted, working -- concerned about this for several years. I believe that we need to leave this in the hands of the Office of Early Childhood and, as I said, I look forward in the -- in the future to hearing that they have put a proposal in front of the Education Committee and this Legislature that will make this happen.

So at this point, I speak in opposition to the amendment and I ask that when the vote is taken, it is taken by roll. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Senator Boucher. A roll call vote will be taken. Please.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I rise to support this amendment. Although I do recognize that this is a very important bill and needs to move forward, but, obviously, this amendment strikes a chord with many of us here, and particularly to our distinguished Chair of the Education Committee who, for

years, I believe, also was an advocate of changing the school start age, as were many of us as well.

I have -- and I really commend Senator McKinney for bringing it to us at this appropriate time. I, like many, have children and I have two out of my three born in the months of late October and early November and they were both boys and essentially ran into this issue as well.

I don't know why we like to pick on boys sometimes, but it appears that there's a certain emotional maturation rate that differs sometimes between boys and girls. And oftentimes, parents do hold their sons back a year, oftentimes, and many other states actually have this start time and it would be uniform.

And especially as people come in and out of our state or move into Connecticut, they find that we are different, very different, from what the vast majority of other states in the country really require.

It is unusual and I am surprised that we are still debating this issue after so many years, that we haven't made that change now, and I can well understand why Senator McKinney brought his forward, particularly in the way in which he's done so, in a way that allows the process to work and actually puts this in place years ahead, four years ahead, so that everyone can plan, particularly our preschool programs well.

So it is a very good proposal. I hope it does move forward if this amendment does not this evening. But again, I will take this opportunity to also thank Senator Beth Bye, who has been really outstanding in her advocacy for this subject and her dedication to children's education, both in her private life and in her political endeavors and services as well. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll vote and the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call on Senate "E" has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted, the machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, would you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On Senate Amendment Schedule "E".

Total number voting	34
Those voting Yea	12
Those voting Nay	22
Absent and not voting	2

THE CHAIR:

The amendment fails. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? Senator Bye.

SENATOR BYE:

Thank you -- thank you, Madam President.

I rise to support the underlying bill now that the amendment is no longer on the floor. And I really want to go out of my way to thank some people because I think today is a historic day in this Senate and for early childhood education in Connecticut.

I want to start by thank Senator Williams. His leadership and determination on behalf of families and children in Connecticut is on display today for everyone to see. And his dedication will result in at least a decade, and probably more, of high quality early childhood education for children and families in Connecticut in a way that's building on the strength that our state has, which is our education system.

So I -- I want to make sure to recognize him and recognize Senator Stillman, the Chair of the Education Committee.

She has always been so supportive of early childhood education, recognizing its importance, and also recognizing its importance for family. She's a real champion for families.

I also really have to go out of my way to thank Governor Malloy. I lived in Stamford and worked in early childhood when he was first elected mayor and he had a vision for a system in Stamford that's been realized and he brought that vision here as a leader and to make sure that, as a state, we're moving toward universal preschool with his proposal this year that this meshes with and builds on.

I also want to make sure to thank the Early Childhood Alliance and I hope the circle will indulge me because this is a group that comes here every day -- every month, every week during the session, depending on what time of year, and they've been talking a lot this session about what's the best path.

Years ago, there were three women named Elaine Alisberg, Diane Warner, and Jean Rustasi, who said to say us, back when I was on the Alliance, you better get your voices together and speak to the Legislature with one voice to advance early childhood in the Legislature.

And today, they would be so proud of this alliance, which, just like when they were there, has lively discussions about what's in children's best interest in communities, best interest. And so I really appreciate their leadership and input on this bill.

They've been working on the office for several years. They've got to be so proud of their work with this bill coming out today. And I know I appreciate their input.

Today, with this bill, Connecticut is on path to build a system of early care and education that builds on the strengths of home visiting that's high quality, family childcare that's high quality, community-based programs, and school-based programs for children.

Early childhood and having early childhood education in and of itself is not enough. It has to be high quality and this proposal recognizes this, asking for NAYC accreditation for all kinds of programs. This is also part

of why we need an Office of Early Childhood Education to assure that quality.

As a state, I think Democrats, Republicans, the Senate, the House, the Governor, we all know and want to solve the challenge of the achievement gap and that's why we're here today pushing this bill forward, to help close the achievement gap before it starts.

This is one tool that we know closes the achievement gap. There's a lot of speculation, a lot of programs going on in the state that are trying to close the achievement gap. The research is there; we know this does. Nobel Laureate James Heckman has been all over this country begging government to invest, that it will save government money if they invest in early childhood education.

But sometimes, I think when we listen to people like James Heckman, we forget that behind government savings are real people. Behind the savings on special education costs are children who go to school and instead of feeling incompetent and incapable, feel successful from the start.

Behind the savings on healthcare, are children who, because they're in a program, get referred to a doctor when they have a challenge. There are parents who get the support of teachers so that they can be better parents and instill some things in their children that will help them forever.

Behind the government savings because of the early investments are children who have food from free and reduced lunch, starting earlier, having high quality meals, getting to college because they've been successful in school. The savings that James Heckman talks about have real people and real parents and real children behind them.

I think sometimes we forgot how important preschool is to help parents work to support their families. We're in a really good place in Connecticut right now. We have a governor with leadership, we have a legislature with leadership in early childhood education, and we've had bipartisan support for high quality early childhood for -- for two decades in Connecticut.

And in the title of this bill, it talks about the Office of Early Childhood. So in closing, I want to say that may be one of the best legacies of this bill, on top of building

spaces, which are so critical, over 4,000 a year. We're building a system that integrates that and makes sure it all works together in a seamless way to help families.

We're still not going to be able to reach every child who needs preschool with this initiative, but we'll be able to reach thousands more, and for those thousands more, there will be more school success, better health outcomes, and really support for families who are working to get by when they have young children.

So it's such a proud day to stand on the Senate floor and support his bill and I thank the circle for the indulgence. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark?

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

It's -- I rise for a few questions to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

Senator Stillman, even in Senator Bye's remarks a moment ago, she said that, you know, we're not going to be able to reach every single child in the State of Connecticut, but this is our step in that direction. We also heard Senator Witkos, Senator Fasano talk about funding and how that will work and -- and how we certainly not always fund our obligations.

But my question to you, as ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, has to do with the money. And although I do support the underlying concept and the idea, I'm curious how this program or programs are going to work for all of our districts. And for example, if you could -- well, if -- let me start with that. If you could give me a -- an overall 10,000 foot approach how this money will be spread across the state towards these efforts. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you to Senator Kane. I think that this is a -- a great framework to -- to meet -- to reach many more children than we have already. I -- I believe that these two programs together, the Governor's initiative, which is focused more on priority schools and Alliance Districts, and this particular -- and the Smart Start program, which gives opportunities to those communities that sort of -- and their families, that sort of fall between the cracks.

You know, they -- they don't earn -- they earn too much money to be -- participate in certain programs and yet they don't earn enough to be able to afford private pre-K for their children.

So the fact that we have a program that we're putting in place for ten years I think is -- is extremely meaningful. The Governor's program, which will go on for another four years, I believe. I'm not on the Appropriations Committee. You, sir, are, so I don't know whether you are -- are aware of those details. I'm sure you are.

But certainly, I think together, we do have that opportunity to spread the opportunities around, as you -- as you asked.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

I do believe that this bill that we have in front of us, which was amended by Senate "A", is almost a conglomerate of the three different bills that we were looking at throughout the process. So that's why I bring this question to you. Unfortunately, there's no fiscal note on this. It's -- it's on the underlying bill.

But -- for -- so for example, in Section 8, if I can refer to that, is that the -- when it talks about the priority school districts and the Alliance School Districts, this is the Governor's proposal, through you, Madam President?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Through you, Madam President, yes. His proposal does focus on the priority school districts, but that's not to say that those districts, if they can prove an unmet need according to the Smart Start guidelines and the Office of Early Childhood deems it appropriate, they can apply for a grant as well as a grant under the Governor's program.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President. So I guess what I'm asking is -- and because in the Section 8, it talks about the eight towns in the state with the largest population, and I get that. And -- and I understand the efforts. What about the other 161? What about the Watertown's and the Middlebury's and the Woodbury's and the Southbury's of the world? What about -- what about those towns? Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

Through you, I believe that's what the Smart Start initiative is about.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

And -- how much money will be in that Smart Start program? Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you to Senator Kane, it'll be \$20 million a year for the next ten years.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

And is there a formula how that \$20 million per year will be divvied up? Is it a application process? Is it based on per capita income? I mean, what's the -- the reasoning or the definition of how that money will be distributed going back to the -- to my examples of the -- some of the towns that I represent? Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

Through you to the -- to the good Senator. The Department of Early Childhood will design and administer a program in consultation with the Department of Education to reimburse local and regional boards for capital expenses as well as operating expenses. If they can -- to expand the preschool programs in the public schools, if they can -- those communities can demonstrate an unmet need.

The -- the framework right now is for a capital grant of up to \$75,000 per classroom. It's not by slots, the way the Governor's proposal is. This is by classroom, to renovate and expand -- or expand a building and also provide an operating grant annually for five years, which can be renewed at that fifth year for another five years if they're successful.

And that particular grant has parameters of up to \$5,000 per child served, or up to \$75,000 per classroom. But it does have a cap, per district, of \$300,000.

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

I thank Senator Stillman for answering my questions. One last question, if I may. So -- and -- and I appreciate the -- the very thorough explanation you gave me. So then, you can see towns like you represent or I represent and some others in the circle being able to participate in this program? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President, and through you, yes.

SENATOR KANE:

Great.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

I thank Senator Stillman for answering my questions.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark? If not -- if not, Mr. Clerk, please call for a roll call vote. The machine is open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. If all members have voted, if all members have voted, the machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally, please.

THE CLERK:

On Senate Bill Number 25, as amended by Senate "A".

Total number voting	35
Those voting Yea	33
Those voting Nay	2
Absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

The bill is adopted. The bill passed.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

**S - 676
CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL. 57
PART 8
2311 – 2667**

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SENATE

002460
8
May 3, 2014

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank -- thank you, Madam President.

And just in -- in closing I would just like to say the dyslexia portion of this bill we had one of the largest public hearings we've ever had in the Education Committee and the outpouring of need was very obvious so I'm delighted this is here before us tonight.

If there isn't any objection, I would like to ask that it be placed on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered.

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

House -- I'm sorry, Senate Bill Number 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. It's amended by Senate "A".

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

Yes this is a familiar -- I move Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the House.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage.

Will you remark, Ma'am.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes, thank you very much.

This bill that is before us has a familiar number but it has changed from when it was before the Circle just a few days ago.

The House separated the two office -- the -- the one Office of Early Childhood bill that we had in front of us and this is the second part which establishes the Connecticut Smart Start Competitive Grant Program to reimburse towns for costs related to pre-school expansion.

It is exactly the same language that passed in -- in the original bill here in the Senate a couple of days ago. We talked about it extensively and I can tell you that it is identical language to that. It is a single issue now in this bill and I urge passage.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark? Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President.

I also rise to support this. As was just mentioned we've seen most of this language before and it did pass here very easily in the State Senate.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark? Will you remark? Senator Williams.

SENATOR WILLIAMS:

Thank you, Madam President.

I rise to support the bill. To thank very much our Education Chair, Andrea Stillman, for her work on this and all of the pre-K issues before us. Also to thank our Appropriations Chair, Beth Bye, who did a tremendous amount of work on this as well, some of the advocacy groups who supported this.

Madam President, for every dollar we invest in quality pre-K we save \$7 and avoided special education, remedial education and social service costs. This bill creates the Connecticut Smart Start Program which will help schools address unmet pre-K need throughout the state and we provide high quality pre-K to our students, and especially those students who are not receiving pre-K education at this time.

We do the best we can to lessen the achievement gap and the way Smart Start does this is the best way to reach those students in all four corners of the State of Connecticut who are not now receiving that pre-K.

So thank you, Madam President, and again it is my privilege to support this legislation.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes, thank you, Madam President.

I want to thank Senator leader -- Senator Williams for his leadership on this bill. I want to thank Senator Boucher for her support as well and -- and my Co-Chair, Representative Fleischmann.

If there isn't any objection, I'd like --

THE CHAIR:

There's an objection, Ma'am.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Oh I'm sorry.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you very much.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote and the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted, the machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On House Bill Number -- Senate Bill Number --

THE CHAIR:

Twenty-five.

THE CLERK:

-- 25.

Total Number Voting		34
Necessary for Adoption	18	
Those voting Yea		32
Those voting Nay		2
Absent not voting		2

THE CHAIR:

The bill will be -- and the bill has passed.

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

House Bill Number 5466, AN ACT --

THE CHAIR:

Sir, sir.

THE CLERK:

Oh, House Bill Number 5559 --

THE CHAIR:

That's good.

THE CLERK:

-- AN ACT CONCERNING A UNIFORM REGIONAL SCHOOL
CALENDAR.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes, thank you, Madam President.

Got three in a row here. That's unusual but yes,
thank you.

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**APPROPRIATIONS
PART 3
1108 – 1756**

2014

Jared Herrera? Okay; let's leave the kids to the side, so go right ahead, sir.

SENATOR BYE: You picked a lucky number, Rick.

REP. WALKER: Yeah.

RICHARD J. PORTH: It's the first time ever, for me.

Thanks, really very much, for the opportunity to testify, and I'll move through this testimony quickly.

My name is Richard Porth, and I serve as CEO of United Way of Connecticut, and the testimony I'm providing today is in enthusiastic support for the, for Governor's Bill No. 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. And I present this testimony on behalf of United Way of Connecticut and all of, all 15 of the local United Ways in Connecticut.

We've had a long history in the United Way movement in providing support for local early childhood programs. Just last year, local United Ways invested more than \$4.2 million in various early childhood programs, including some creating new slots for, especially for at-need kids and also some initiatives addressing quality in early care provision and -- and other, others as well.

United Way of Connecticut serves as the state association for all 15 local United Ways, and in particular, we have a -- a long partnership that we're proud of with the state government, in which among other things, we provide a number of integrated and synergistic early childhood services, which include 2-1-1 Child Care, Child Development Infoline, and the Care 4 Kids program, the child care subsidy program.

During all those years, we've -- we've come to understand the importance of early childhood programs, and in particular the value of coordination, both at the state level and at the local level in collaboration in the, in the provision of these services. So we applaud the Governor; we applaud the Legislature's champions of early care and education, and we applaud the new leadership of the Office of Early Childhood for this initiative and for the progress that's already been made. And we respectfully request that the Legislature formally authorize the creation of the Office of Early Childhood.

I'd just finish by saying United Ways in the state pledge our complete support for the success of the new Office of Early Childhood, and in particular a question that Representative Walker asked earlier, during the presentations, we will work very hard to help in the smooth transition of Care 4 Kids from DSS to the Office of Early Childhood. It's very important to us; I know it's important to you, and we'll do everything we can to make this as smooth a transition as possible.

And happy to answer any questions; thank you.

REP. WALKER: Thank you, and thank you for your testimony.

RICHARD J. PORTH: Sure.

SENATOR BYE: Thank you.

REP. WALKER: Dr. Booker DeVaughn.

SENATOR BYE: Welcome, Booker.

BOOKER T. DeVAUGHN, JR.: Thank you, Senator.

Next, Mellina -- oh, Marilyn.

MARILYN CALDERON: Marilyn.

REP. WALKER: Marilyn; I'm sorry. Thank you, Marilyn.

MARILYN CALDERON: Good evening, Senator Beth Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished Appropriations Committee team.

I am Marilyn Calderon, Executive Director of Connecticut Parent Power, a statewide, parent-wide organization here in the state of Connecticut where we educate, mobilize, and engage parents in meaningful conversations across the state to take an active role in changing policies that work for children in areas of early care and education, school -- school-age reform, and health care reform.

For the past three years, our organization has worked diligently alongside statewide partners that include Connecticut Voices for Children, the Connecticut Association for Human Services, All Our Kin, and the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, with hundreds of parents, providers, and constituents across the state to ensure that our vulnerable children get the right start.

Connecticut Parent Power is here today to ask that you continue to help us, moving forward with our agenda of passing Senate Bill 25, AN ACT CONCERNING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD to move into statute, and Senate Bill 26, AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF 120 SPACES FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION for our most vulnerable children in the state of Connecticut. We are looking forward to finishing our collective work with you,

effectively, efficiently, and equitably, to ensure that all children get the right start.

The Governor's present proposed budget is focused on expanding access to high-quality early care and education systems for all children, right from the start. This proposed budget is bold and it expands opportunities for all families, especially with children ages birth to five, to get the right start. We want to ensure that all children have the appropriate social, emotional, and academic growth process opportunities, with your support.

For far too long, we have had systems that have failed our families, especially our most vulnerable, our Latinos and African-American families across the state. So we ask you that since we have gone the extra mile of starting this process hand-in-hand with the Office of Early Childhood, facilitating conversations across the state with our families, getting their voices being heard at every level to ensure that our sustained system of an Office of Early Childhood is, indeed, going to be followed through on, we're looking for it to become, get into statute, because we know that this is an exciting time for the State of Connecticut. We have a Governor, and leaders like yourself, that have been the champions of children in our early childhood process, and we know that early is good but earlier is definitely better.

Connecticut Parent Power acknowledges the considerable -- considerable amount of time and cost of all of you really putting forth the importance of early childhood and understanding that safe, quality care and education should always be at the forefront, not the funding amount.

With that said, we believe that the Governor's proposed budget is a bold one and a sound one, because we know that if we invest more in the early years, we're going to remedy the issues that are preventative in the near future, in regards to what we invest in our children now.

Our Latino and African-American children, that we always write about in our report, deserve a fair chance to have equitable access, and we know that with this hand-in-hand process of working with you, the Office of Early Childhood, and our statewide partners, our parents, most importantly, and our children, we can make things happen.

So please continue to work on finishing the work that we started three years ago, and also keep in mind that this is for the future of our children, supporting Senate Bill 25 and 26.

In advance, I thank you for your consideration.

REP. WALKER: Thank you. And thank you, very much, for your testimony. Have a --

MARILYN CALDERON: Thank you.

REP. WALKER: -- good evening.

MARILYN CALDERON: Have a blessed night.

REP. WALKER: Mellina?

MELLINA SILVER: Yes.

REP. WALKER: Followed by Vijay Nair. Vijay Nair?
Yes. Followed by Stephen Adair.

MELLINA SILVER: Hello.

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**APPROPRIATIONS
PART 4
1757 -2176**

2014



Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Regarding Support for the following Senate Bills:
S.B. 25 – An Act Concerning the Office of Early Childhood Moving into Statute
S.B. 26 – An Act Concerning the Expansion of 1020 Early Childhood Spaces
Submitted by Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director
Connecticut Parent Power
Monday, February 23, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Beth Bye, Representative Walker and Distinguished Appropriations Committee Team:

I am Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director of Connecticut Parent Power a statewide parent-led organization that engages, educates and mobilizes diverse parents from across the state to act on issues that matter most to them improving outcomes for all children in areas of early childhood, care, education, health care reform and K-12 school systems.

For the past 3 years, our organization has worked diligently alongside our statewide partners that include CT Voices for Children, CT Association for Human Services, All Our Kin, and the CT Early Childhood Alliance with hundreds of parents, providers and constituents to ensure that our most vulnerable children, alongside their families are kept in the forefront when decisions are being made to ensure the well being of all children and families.

Connecticut Parent Power is here today to ask that you all continue to support the following bills:

~ S.B. 25 – An Act Concerning the Office of Early Childhood moving into statute

~ S.B. 26 – An Act Concerning the Expansion of 1020 Early Childhood Spaces

We are looking to finishing off our collective work effectively, efficiently and most of all equitably to ensure that all children have access to a quality and sound start through the full establishment of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

The Governor's present proposed budget is focused in expanding access to high quality early childhood education for all young children "right from the start!" This proposed budget is bold as it expands an additional 1020 spaces to access quality pre-kindergarten experiences, which is critical for our low-income children and their families to be able to take advantage of this opportunity that will be life changing for appropriate social, emotional, physical and educational growth.

For too long our services and programs have been fragmented and difficult to navigate for our families. Having had the experience to work with the OEC for the past two years, alongside our parents and partners, we have seen what we are capable of accomplishing together! We have spent hundreds of hours working collectively to share our vision for our Connecticut children and do believe that the OEC will be instrumental, as an effective structure for creating a system that fosters the quality in all early childhood settings that provide a one point of entry into a family friendly system to be able to access necessary resources with less confusion to get to the core that matters, affordable, accessible and child-



centered outcomes for all children. Although the Office of Early Childhood has begun to shape the services and programs for Connecticut families, there is still so much to get done with our collective action. Parents and families want the systems-level changes required to streamline costs, while bringing a high level of transparency to our stakeholders that are willing to work towards solution based action to ensure this works for all children and their families.

This is an exciting time for the state of Connecticut! We have a Governor and leaders, like yourselves, that have recognized that early is good, but earlier is better...by coordinating our early childhood programs and services through the creation of the OEC is what will lead us all into a preventive investment that will pay off in the long run. In the past year, we have seen the OEC work with partners, like CTPP and statewide team, to begin the creation of a system that improves outcomes for children, encouraging more family engagement through statewide conversations, creating early screening tools with appropriate referral process that will in turn coordinate data structures that ensure all children enter a sound system with the necessary resources.

Connecticut Parent Power acknowledges the considerable investment of time and cost for an equitable early childhood systems build approach, however, safe, quality care and education should always be at the forefront when it comes to our most vulnerable - our children. Therefore, the aforementioned pieces are essential if we are going to create a comprehensive, family-friendly, coordinated system of services and programs that will provide a quality start for all of our Connecticut children and their families.

We believe that the Governor's proposed budget is a bold and sound budget for all children, and that the final step in moving the Office of Early Childhood into statute is crucial at this time to ensure the well-being of children, alongside their families and the invested stakeholders who care about making the future more predictable with the best outcomes that lie within the first 5 years of an innocent child's life. Please continue to finish the work we started for the future of all of our children by supporting S.B. 25 and S.B. 26! In advance, I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Calderón
Executive Director
CT Parent Power

P. 7 L 2



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

February 24, 2014

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Elaine Zimmerman. I am the Executive Director of the CT Commission on Children and am here today to speak on the Governor's Budget and SB 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood.

Our state began school readiness policy with attention to low-income children in our poorest cities. The focus was on access, quality and supply. In 1997, our state stood out. We were the only state assuring care for both three and four year olds, combining dollars between social services and education. We developed local school readiness councils and assured accreditation for school readiness slots. But the overall initiative was based on programs. It was not systemic, across all early care programs.

SB 25 takes what our state began and brings it from program policy to a comprehensive system. The Office of Early Childhood brings all the programs serving young children together. It offers a continuum of services from birth to age eight, creates a coordinated early care and education system, and assures our teachers are well-trained and educated. It begins a data and accountability plan, oversees safety standards and the integration of home visitation and early care. This is the whole house approach.

Similarly, the Governor's budget offers more inspectors, provider rate increases, professional development, and quality enhancements. The budget and legislation begin to create a seamless system for young children, with growth and quality. The latter is imperative as early care and education is not, in and of itself, a panacea. Poor early care can do harm and good care helps children thrive.

Early care and education programs, if they are of quality, are equalizers. They level the skill set for formal schooling. The gap in achievement between low-income children and their middle-class peers is real and significant.

- Before entering kindergarten, the average cognitive scores of preschool-age children in the highest socioeconomic group are 60 percent above the average scores of children in the lowest socioeconomic group.

- At age 4 years, children who live below the poverty line are 18 months below what is normal for their age group; by age 10 that gap is still present. For children living in the poorest families, the gap is even larger.
- By the time children from middle-income families with well-educated parents are in third grade, they know about 12,000 words. Third grade children from low-income families with undereducated parents who don't talk to them very much have vocabularies of around 4,000 words, one-third as many words as their middle-income peers.

All children should have access to good care while their parents work or job train. But not all do. Often parents need to rely on neighbors, boyfriends, or older children to create a patchwork system of care.

Oral language development and pre-literacy are the bridge and precursors to language skills development in kindergarten and first grade. Yet, some children have families where reading together is not the daily norm due to language differences, level of adult literacy, and time shortages, juggling a few jobs to make ends meet.

Before entering formal education, children should:

- Have more than 1000 hours of experience with books, alphabet games, storybook reading and activities;
- Have been included in conversation and treated as successful speakers and listeners;
- Have engaged in playtime that employs symbols such as acting out roles, designing stories and using props;
- Be exposed to print and writing in their daily life.

Without the quality environments in child care where teachers are reading to children, the divide between those who have and those that do not, increases.

There is mounting evidence that intervention beginning during infancy or preschool age has a greater impact on child outcomes and families than beginning to provide services at school age (Barnett and Escobar, 1990). In spite of federal mandates for early intervention, limitations in the identification process, diminish access to services (Meisels and Wasik), 1990).

Nationally, 11% of school age children receive special education services, 4.9% of preschool children receive special education services and only 1.6% of infants and toddlers receive early intervention services. These statistics indicate a significant need to improve early identification of children who are likely to require special education at school age. In spite of federal

legislation for early intervention, we are not reaching most of the children and families who need help as early as we should.

There are other challenges to quality and supply. In some CT cities, a shortage of space and buildings exist, limiting access to care. Though our standards for early care are excellent, our oversight of the standards have ironically, been very poor. This has created opportunity for safety hazards and poor practices to prevail. We have not been visiting early care sites at least once a year, and studies have shown serious danger to young children.

A few suggestions:

- Build in explicit information for parents on choices and on quality. Let them know how they can partner with early care. Recent focus groups with families, performed by the Governor's Early Care and Education Cabinet, inform us that parents, in general, do not know about the resources available or how to choose good care from poor care, though every parent cares.
- Address English Language learners. With our growing demographics, there is no reference to ELL in this bill. Many families will simply not send their children to quality programs if the cultural sensitivity and language barriers are not met.
- Increase wages a bit further, if possible. Many providers leave the field to take other employment due to the low wages. In fact, when early care providers are trained, they often rapidly move into the public school system to garner improved salary and benefits. In other words, with quality training, we lose a large workforce. If we expect our providers to have a Bachelor's Degree by 2020, we will need to raise wages further.
- Assure parity across systems. State funded centers need a bit more resources to be on a level playing field with the school readiness programs. About \$500,000 should be added to the Child Care Services line item, as the calculation factored in only 1/2 the total allocation to the State Funded Centers and did not include the half coming from a federal block grant.
- Make sure our early care providers are substantively trained in developmentally appropriate early literacy and math skills. With the largest achievement gap in reading in the states, we can be improving curriculum practice in pre-k as well as in our kindergarten through grade three classrooms. There is evidence across early learning settings that all children who are behind can make gains when they have teachers who know how to actively involve children in learning and have the appropriate supports.
- Consider a two generational strategy. Research shows that working on school readiness and workforce readiness together helps the whole family. Given that the number one indicator of a child's literacy is the literacy of the mother, we should consider adult

education, GED and community college strategies for the early care children's parents. This would both help with poverty reduction and with optimal child development. Our TANF funds are allowable for this.

- **Assure the bridge between infant toddler programming and preschool. Integrate training of home visitors and early care providers, where possible, so the field is better aligned and skills are learned for different ages and stages of a young child's development. Education reform efforts need to start as early as birth, and be continued through preschool.**
- **Develop preschool to grade three work around specific policies such as the achievement gap, social emotional behavior, executive functioning, early language and vocabulary. With a policy theme that is key to children's learning and that all teachers could put their arms around, the early care and Kindergarten through grade three fields could be better aligned. An intentional curriculum is an important component of quality early learning and most effective when it is consistent with district-wide kindergarten through third grade (K-3) professional development activities and early learning standards.**
- **Weave the early care provider into the evolving focus and training on the achievement gap. It is not clear that the early care provider understands the impact of poverty, institutional racism or family stressors. Teachers need to have hands-on professional development and ongoing supports to better interact with low-income children to promote early learning.**
- **Assure full day kindergarten in the four Alliance Districts that do not yet have full day kindergarten. As a pre-k to third grade policy, we do our children poorly if they go from full day preschool to two hours of kindergarten.**
- **Stop parents from holding back their children from kindergarten to gain the edge in academics and sports. The issue in kindergarten is less the month of starting than the fact that parents who have resources choose to hold their children back so they are the smartest and the best athletes. Families who are poor must send their children to kindergarten because they cannot afford the early care alternative. So poor children are always the youngest. We need to disallow this, as New York State has done and limit the age that one can be in kindergarten on the back end, not at the front end.**
- **Utilize TANF dollars more aggressively for both school readiness and workforce readiness. Enclosed is a summary of our use of dollars and the opportunities that we do not fully utilize.**

Closing the achievement gap is a large task requiring strategic planning and action at the classroom, local, state, and federal levels. For children in the highest-risk families and poorest communities, even the best early care and early learning opportunities will not be enough to help them perform on a level consistent with their more advantaged peers until there is a coordinated system, from infancy to grade three, of high expectations, shared training and quality throughout.

Thank you for your time.

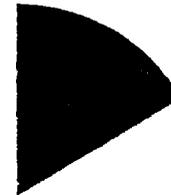
TANF Spending Fact Sheet

Connecticut

In 2012, Connecticut spent \$268 million in federal TANF block grant funds and claimed \$226 million in state maintenance of effort (MOE) spending, for a total of \$494 million in TANF spending.

How TANF and MOE Dollars Were Spent in Connecticut in 2012

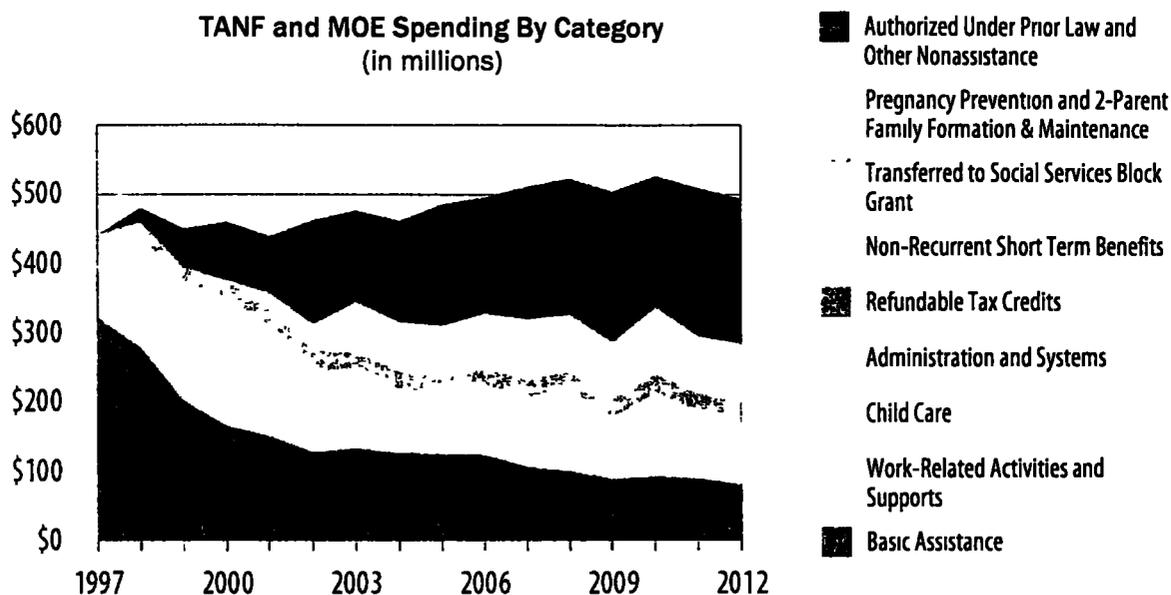
■	Basic Assistance	16%
	Work-Related Activities	4%
	Child Care	7%
	Administration and Systems	6%
■	Refundable Tax Credits	0%
	Other Services	66%



Spending by Category, 2012* (in millions of dollars and as a percentage of TANF and MOE spending)	Connecticut Spending 2012		National Spending 2012	
	Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage
Basic Assistance	\$81	16%	\$8,982	29%
Work-Related Activities	\$22	4%	\$2,613	8%
Child Care	\$36	7%	\$5,022	16%
Administration and Systems	\$31	6%	\$2,254	7%
Refundable Tax Credits	\$0	0%	\$2,556	8%
Non-Recurrent Short Term Benefits	\$1	0%	\$538	2%
Transferred to Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)	\$27	5%	\$1,133	4%
Pregnancy Prevention & 2-Parent Family Formation and Maintenance	\$87	18%	\$2,296	7%
Authorized Under Prior Law (AUPL) and Other Nonassistance	\$210	42%	\$5,963	19%

*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

How TANF and MOE Dollars Were Spent in Connecticut Over Time



TANF Allocations and MOE Requirements

- Each state receives a fixed federal TANF block grant annually and, in any given year, a state may spend more or less than its federal block grant allocation
- Every year, each state must also spend a minimum of 75 percent of its historic state spending as a "maintenance of effort" (MOE) requirement, and a state may report state expenditures that exceed the required minimum.
- The fixed annual TANF block grant amount has declined by 30% between 1997 and 2012 in real terms.

Annual TANF Allocations and MOE Obligations for Connecticut

TANF block grant amount	\$267 million
80% MOE obligation	\$196 million
75% MOE obligation	\$183 million

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**EDUCATION
PART 1
1 – 659**

**2014
INDEX**

HB 5043 Commissioner, welcome.

HB 5355 COMMISSIONER PRYOR: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chair Stillman, Chair Fleischmann, Representative Ackert, I'm very pleased to present to this entire committee today, and it's always a pleasure.

And I do want to also welcome Representative Lemar. It will be a pleasure to work with you, sir.

I'm going to comment on a few of the bills, and then, of course, as you wish, receive questions.

First, SB-25 and SB-26 regarding early childhood. This department offers strong support for both of these proposals. When the governor articulated our education reform agenda back in 2011, we organized our agenda under six principles.

The very first principle was, and I quote, "enhance families' access to early childhood education." Early childhood education is education reform. It's a very wise investment and we support this component of the agenda very, very strongly.

We are pleased with the progress that we in full partnership with the general assembly, and in particular with this committee, have made regarding early childhood investments to date, and we certainly support the continuing work in investment in this area.

While the Office of Early Childhood operates as a separate entity, an independent one, the State Department of Education's pleased to serve as the administrative home for the OEC, and we're pleased to offer support for the

office in the way of fiscal, legal, personnel, and other services, but most importantly to partner on the ongoing efforts regarding our youngest students.

So we are very, very much in support of these efforts. I know Dr. Jones-Taylor will speak to the particulars, but just wanted to open by making sure we were clear on that.

H.B. 5043, regarding the budget implementer on items concerning education, I just want to note that this legislation primarily implements the provisions of the Phase 3 Sheff stipulation agreement.

This was agreed to by the plaintiffs and the state in recent negotiations, and it's important that the stipulation be implemented in order to allow the department to carry out the agreed-upon work.

I should note a few elements of that agreement. I know that Madam Chair, Mr. Chair, you'll be holding additional sessions regarding Sheff, per se, but just a notation that we're proud of the fact that we did not agree to substantial capital expenditures, new facilities in this Phase 3 stipulation, and we emphasized investment in Hartford, themes that I think are important not only in this instance but going forward.

I want to make a couple of notations. As pertains to H.B. 5355, regarding collaborations between local boards of ed and school resource officers, we support this legislation.

We think it's very important that school resource officers be part of the school system, that there be articulated agreements in the form of MOAs that ensure that security, as it's

McGaughey and then Representative Urban, although that is subject to change based on the clock.

Welcome.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Ranking Member Senator Boucher and Representative Ackert, and I would like to welcome Representative Lemar, who is my former alderman and now my representative, and all members of the Education Committee.

My name is Myra Jones-Taylor, and I am the executive director of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to address two bills before you today.

I would like to summarize the two proposed bills. First, Senate Bill 25 would statutorily establish the Office of Early Childhood by moving early childhood programs spread across four state agencies into one agency.

And Senate Bill 26 would create a pathway for Connecticut to expand high-quality early learning opportunities for young children. It would direct the Office of Early Childhood to develop a plan to achieve universal access to preschool, and increase quality in our childcare licensing system.

I will begin with Senate Bill 25. Senate Bill 25 would codify the Office of Early Childhood and lay out in detail the charge of the office to ensure that young children are ready for school and lifelong success.

The centralized accountability of the office allows for a concerted focus on children from birth through age five, through unified services, policy, budget, data and outcome measurement. By codifying the Office of Early Childhood into statute, it will give the office the necessary statutory authority over its various programs, allowing the office to enforce its regulatory authority if necessary.

It also allows the office to apply for federal funding and other funding opportunities that only state agencies are currently able to apply for. The move to establish the office is bold and it's a smart investment.

A unified system and vision for early childhood leads to better outcomes for children, improved communication with parents, higher standards for providers and more effective decision-making for policy makers.

And now I will turn to Senate Bill 26. Senate Bill 26 makes statutory changes that will allow for the expansion of early childhood opportunities for young children in Connecticut.

An estimated 4,000 low-income children live in our poorest communities and have no access to high-quality pre-K. The governor has taken another bold step by calling for universal access to preschool for low-income children by 2019.

Senate Bill 26 also requires the Office of Early Childhood to develop and submit a plan to the governor by January 1st, 2015 to achieve universal access to pre-kindergarten within our state's course communities.

In addition, the bill also makes statutory changes to require annual licensing inspections of licensed childcare centers and licensed family childcare homes. Currently unannounced inspections are happening every two years for centers and every three years for family homes.

These are exciting times for those committed to early childhood, and I am happy to answer questions for you if you have any. Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you very much.

I know we have copies of your testimony, if not in paper certainly online. So folks can read through it, you know, more closely. And I appreciate your hearing the bell, the buzzer, whatever.

I do have, if I may, as a co-chair, jump in with a couple of questions to begin with this time.

SB25
As you well, know and most of us know, we were unsuccessful in taking action on establishing as a legislature on establishing an Office of Early Childhood. We had to rely on an executive order of the governor so that could start the work and start establishing that office. Can you give us -- what's it, about six months or so that you have been working diligently with so many people to establish this office?

Can you tell us how things are going?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: I would love to. Thank you for asking that question. I am quite proud of the work that we have been doing in the Office of Early Childhood.

Since we were created by executive order, we

have really hit the ground running. We are in the process of working with many community stakeholders, including the United Way, to develop a comprehensive early screening system.

We know that the earlier we detect children who have developmental delays, social/emotional challenges, the earlier we detect them, the earlier we can address them and prevent having costlier and less effective interventions later on. So we are undertaking that and it's very exciting.

We are rolling out our early learning and development standards. We have done numerous webinars and outreach with communities and we're very proud of that work, getting a lot of exciting national attention for that.

We are also in the process of developing a quality enhancement system. We have a lot of technical assistance and professional development opportunities across the state, but it's not a system. And so we are just about to embark on figuring out kind of a mapping of it, assessing what we have, and then making sure that it is in line with what we want to see in terms of quality and then making sure that providers are aware of it.

And really the big process here -- there are two big things we want to tackle with that system. One is to get programs that are unlicensed, get providers that are unlicensed, have them become licensed.

We know that is the basic. Providing basic health and safety for children is really the very beginning of providing quality. And then making sure those who are providing licensed care are moving up a continuum of quality, so that they can become NAEYC accredited, which is

the National Association for Education of Young Children.

They have a gold standard for centers, or NAFCC accredited, the National Association for Family Childcare. Make sure that they're accredited there, which is the gold standard for home-based care.

So those are few things that we've undertaken, and then, you know, just the culture building and the moving of many different parts into one, and we've had a number of activities. We have a monthly breakfast, Breakfast with Myra, which might sound corny but it's really a great way to get people.

Eight people sign up and we just sit together and get to know each other and have these wonderful cross-agency conversations. And I get to know my staff more intimately and build trust and confidence.

And then we've also had two all-staff meetings over at the Lyceum that have been fabulous. And one huge outcome of that is that we have a mission and vision statement, which I believe you have as an addendum, that I'm quite proud of.

And we did this together. We did this with all 92 people in a room. So we are really -- this is a heavy list but we are up for the task. And I'm very proud of it, so thank you for asking that question.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you.

Is your staff 92 people? How large is your staff?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So right now we have 31. So we

brought together -- it's very important that we have both the current and the future to make sure that there isn't kind of a sense that we have a bifurcated sense of staff or sense of being.

So right now there are 31 of us. I believe that's so. And then about 92 were attended. I think there's 98 that could possibly be part of the office, considering the budget, that's reflected in the budget right now that will be in the office this year, July 2014.

SENATOR STILLMAN: So you have 31 staff?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Right. And they are --

SENATOR STILLMAN: And the 60-some odd that have been left out of that number, they are from other agencies?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Okay.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So right now the people who moved over were from the Department of Education, so all of the early care and education staff that were at the Education Department are now with us.

The Workforce and Program Improvement Division, from Charts-A-Course, so Charts-A-Course came over from Board of Regents. They are now part of the Office of Early Childhood working on program improvement, staff qualifications for teachers, really thinking of quality in that way.

And then the Children's Trust Fund moved over from the Department of Social Services. And they do Nurturing Families Network, a lot of

our Fatherhood Initiative. They are the lead in the state for the prevention of child abuse.

So we're all together. And then the next 60 will be the Licensing Division, youth camp licensing as well. That includes child care and youth camp licensing, as well as the folks who do the McVeigh, the home visiting, federal grant, they will be coming over as well.

There's also been a feasibility study to see if Birth to 3 could move over, and we submitted that to the governor and to the Appropriations chairs, and the outcome of that is it is feasible. It's actually desirable, and the idea is to do that, push that off a little bit longer.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you for those clarifications. As we talk about staff from other departments coming, moving into the Office of Early Childhood, one of the new responsibilities now of OEC is to perform daycare licensing and abuse investigation, which is -- I don't know if it was or is currently in DPH.

Could you please explain to us as to how ready OEC is to take on this task of the licensing?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Absolutely.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So just to be clear, DPH currently does licensing, and that's the regulatory function, making sure that basic health and safety are met. But child abuse and abuse that is actually done by the Department of Children and Families.

And so there are times when DPH and DCF will go

in as a joint investigation, but the child abuse part, that function will not come over to the Office of Early Childhood.

In terms of our preparation for this, so one thing I didn't mention in all these activities we've been doing, we meet together as a staff, as a leadership team. The leaders of the different divisions that will come into the office meet weekly to make sure that we are prepared for this transition.

In addition to that, one of my staff members leads weekly transition meetings with the different agencies. So Deb Johnson, who's the head of the licensing division, she is quite integrated into our future planning.

We've also met with the licensing staff numerous times, and as you are probably aware, one part of the bill of 26 is to bring new licensing staff into the agency to make sure that we can actually provide annual inspections.

This is something that we have been deemed by federally and locally numerous times, and so it's very important that we think about bringing the system together and actually improving, and that's a huge part of this work.

We've also worked with the National Association for Regulatory Administration over the last year, and we have brought them then to say, okay, here's our licensing system. When I was part of a three-person team doing the planning for this office, the system, we heard many concerns about licensing.

And so we worked with this group NARA to find out what we need to do to improve it. We've gone through a whole needs assessment process

that has already been undertaken, and then we're doing training.

In fact, this week NARA will be in Connecticut working with all of our staff, all of our licensing staff, over the next three days. I think it's Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, doing that initial training so that we can get to consistent ratings, that we can have inspectors who are using their authority approximately.

So we are undertaking a lot, but we are meeting regularly. This is the most important part of the system, if I would say so. If we leave this part out, and if we're not prepared, then we are not really thinking about that fundamental piece. We need to start with children's safety and basic health.

So this is an exciting part, and we're very committed to this part of the agency.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you very much.

Oh, lots of hands, okay. My goodness.

Representative Fleischmann and then Senator Boucher, and then we'll go on that side and we'll go back and forth, okay?

Go right ahead.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I'll try to keep my questions concise, and if you could try and do the same with your responses, we'll hopefully get through the committee and get to other topics.

Just in Senate Bill 25, the kinship grandparents and relatives respite fund is contemplated to move from GSS to the Office of

Early Childhood.

Now, some of the folks effected by that fund are young children, but there are also kids who were outside of the ambit of the young children definition who'd be affected. So why would we want to move that fund from the Department of Social Services over to the envisioned Office for Early Childhood?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you for that question.

That has actually moved over to Probate Court, so that will not come into the Office of Early Childhood. So that is already there, is my understanding. That was moved at the end of last year.

I can clarify that, but --

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Let me correct my question.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: So it's at the Probate Court, but the question is who would be assisting the Probate Court in getting the work done. And currently it's GSS that does it and this bill says OEC would do it.

So I get it for young children, but it doesn't seem to me like it would match up for older kids. Maybe it's something you folks could look into and circle back.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Absolutely. I would be happy to get back to you on that, but sure.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Okay.

And then on Section 12 of this bill, there's reference to something called their "Early

Learning and Development Standards."

Currently on the books we have something called Preschool Curriculum Guidelines. Are these the same things? Are you giving a new name to something we already have on the books, or do you have some new standards in mind that we're not aware of?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes. These are new standards that have been developed with state employees here, a long process of working with experts in the field throughout the state and state employees in Connecticut.

And they have been validated, content validated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and a whole group of independent evaluators, and they are a new set of standards.

They include social/emotional development, they are more comprehensive, they're birth to five. And so we have just rolled those out in communities. We're getting good responses from communities about those standards.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you.

So will the preschool curriculum guidelines be supplanted by these new standards that you're talking about?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes. you know, we have programs that are still using them, and these are -- we're not mandating that providers use these but these are our new standards that were adopted by the early childhood cabinet. That the cabinet is very proud of that they think that this is the direction we're going.

It's a little more comprehensive set of

standards, so communities can choose one or the other. But all of our work will be tied to those early learning development standards.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you. Very helpful.

Lastly, on S.B. 26, I want to applaud you and the administration for championing the expansion of access to preschool, and just to say publicly something that I've discussed with you privately.

You know, as I understand S.B. 26, it currently focuses 90 percent on alliance districts and about 10 percent on non-alliance districts. It's not my understanding that that's actually the distribution of children in poverty who could use this support.

As you know, we have lots of pockets of poverty outside of the alliance district, so I'll be working with you and your staff in trying to make sure that we serve poor children wherever they're found, and that we have an emphasis that's fair and that reflects the fact that there's poverty just across this state that isn't necessarily fully recognized by S.B. 26.

And happy to, you know, if you have any comments or reflections on that, happy to hear those.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you for that.

I know we spoke about this in the Appropriations Committee and other times, and with Senator Bye as well, and others.

You're absolutely right. We just saw 13 more communities that are now eligible under our competitive district guidelines. We are seeing poverty is moving across the state.

And so one good thing about this plan is it's a five-year plan, so right now focused on the urban communities, thinking about our school readiness system. We are also thinking this plan that I will submit to the governor and obviously with the legislature, it's thinking about how do we make sure that we are reaching all children in poverty, and so that will part of our challenge.

The other thing I would say real quickly is that the legislation also allows for flexibility, where there was not necessarily as much in former school readiness legislation that could allow us to move over to competitive districts in ways we hadn't before.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, Representative.

Senator Boucher, followed by Representative Sanchez, and then Representative Lovio.

SENATOR BOUCHER: Hello. Nice to see you here. Thank you very much for your testimony.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

SENATOR BOUCHER: On Bill 26 and 25, on 26 in Section 8, you talk about the regulation of youth camps. Is that something new now, and could you let us know why that's now included into your purview?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Absolutely.

There are functions - - there are staff that provide or perform many different functions in the Department of Public Health around licensing.

And so it made sense in looking at this system,

it made sense to actually not take those functions away from people, and make sure they are brought into the system.

So the people who do some of the youth camp licensing are also critical to the licensing system, the childcare licensing system. And so to take them apart would actually be to the determined in some ways of the other work that happens in the licensing division.

And it goes the other way. So the youth camp licensing staff also rely on the childcare licensing staff to do some of their work.

So it made more sense to bring them into the Office of Early Childhood. There are a few of them, and so instead of leaving them there it makes sense to integrate them and bring them into the fold.

They have also been part of the statewide, or these agency-wide conversations, so they were at both of our events, one in the summer, and one early fall. And so the plan is to fully integrate them into the agency as well.

SENATOR BOUCHER: Thank you for your answer to that.

In the same bill, Bill 26, in Section 6 there is a area under subsection B, numeral 3, "The executive director or designee should make unannounced visits, inspections or investigations to each licensed daycare center, group home each year."

Now, this is a departure from current practice from my understanding. I think I don't know if I read further on that right now they require them to make at least a third, right, a third of the -- but this is very ambitious, and I know that previously you were questioned about

your staffing levels.

And so my question to you is to go from a third of the group that you're looking to inspect to make unannounced inspections to every single one, how do you plan to meet that mission, that goal?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: That is a great question.

So part of the bill asks for an additional group of inspectors, and supervisors and staff to manage that increase. This is something that we are seeing at the federal level, that federal government would like us to start doing the thinking that you might actually see a requirement of this for our childcare development fund.

So what we've done is we've asked for -- we've looked at how many people it would take to get us to an annual visit, and so we have made the appropriate staffing request there. It's about 16 licensing inspectors, two supervisors and one manager, who would be in addition to the licensing staff.

And this is -- I don't have the report. I brought a stack of reports that I brought to the Appropriations hearing. But it's about this tall, the number of reports that have been submitted about our current licensing system. Our backlog of background checks and our lack of annual inspections.

This is a concern that we need to address and we're getting a lot of I would say negative attention. They're great staff, I will say that, but they need some additional support.

SENATOR BOUCHER: That makes sense. And that's great.

And finally, Bill 25, which was highly supported, of course, you know, throughout in a bipartisan way last session. And it appears that you've moved forward fairly well, to your great credit, I might add.

Now why do we actually need this bill if, in fact, we're moving forward, we have the executive order. What makes it imperative that we pass this bill now this year?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you for asking that. So a few things. We can talk about the licensing system for one. We do not have, although the funding would come into the Office of Early Childhood, it would come into our bill or, you know, our agency, we do not have the statutory authority to regulate these inspections without S.B. 25, without passage of Senate Bill 25.

So we could pay the inspectors, for example, but we couldn't actually do a lot of the changes that we're asking them to do. We would not have the authority to do that.

So that's just one example of many, in the sense that it's wonderful to be able to pay the bills and do some things, but if we really want to do these integrated services, if we really want to make policy changes, we need to be in statute, and have that authority to do so.

SENATOR BOUCHER: Thank you for that clarification. And since you're here and there's been some expression about the idea of a universal pre-K to 4th grade for Connecticut, there's been some concerns that have been expressed.

I don't necessarily share those concerns, but how would you answer those individuals that are very worried that the state might mandate

universal preschool for all students rather than it being a voluntary program, where parents could opt out. What do you foresee as a good answer to that concern?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you for that question. So to be very clear, this is definitely a voluntary system. We do not have the resources, frankly, to mandate that all three and four-year olds go to a state-funded program.

And we strongly, I strongly and the administration strongly supports parent choice. So we want to make sure that parents have a voice in where they would like to send their children. And that if they choose to go to a home-based provider, then they should have that opportunity. If they choose to stay home, if they can afford to, with their, you know, stay home as a parent, absolutely.

But we want to make sure that if you do send your child to a program that is outside of the home, that it is of highest quality. We want to make sure that if you decide to stay home as a parent that you have information.

Something that we've been doing is we're rolling out a public information campaign, so that everybody understands and appreciates the critical - - how critical these years are to a child's development.

So this is not a requirement, it's not mandated. But what it does do is it says to families who could not afford to send their child to a high-quality program without state support, we are here to support you.

We know that this is important for you. We know that 70 percent of children in Connecticut

belong to homes where both parents or the single parent work. This is not the day when, you know, it was something that parents could stay home with their children.

And so we want to make sure that if they're not at home with their children it's high quality.

SENATOR BOUCHER: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this.

You're an articulate spokeswoman for this area, and we appreciate your answers.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you, Senator.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Senator.

We go to Representative Sanchez, thank you. I couldn't quite read the writing here.

Representative Sanchez, to be followed by Representative Lavielle. Right I after I said it I could read your writing.

Representative Sanchez, you have the floor.

REP. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you for the work you do on this challenge on the table. And I know I spoke to you last year about this concern that I have. And the concern I have is that as we go forward and move forward with qualifications for these teachers to get their Bachelor's by 2020, how do we compensate them?

I mean, what's going to happen with salary-wise? I mean, I worked for many, many years as a preschool teacher, and I can tell you, you know, my salary was under \$30,000 a year. And

you almost never get any increases at all, you know, cost of living increases in these programs.

So my concern is that as we move forward, and they reach their goals, they're not going to stay at these childcare centers. They're going to move on because they can do much better moving into the public school system or private system.

So is there a process that you've been looking into to look into this issue moving forward with the Office of Early Childhood?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes, thank you for that question. I remember we've had a few conversations about this. You know, this is a national concern. This is something that most states grapple with.

It's as we increase the quality, increase requirements around quality, increase staffing qualifications, we are not necessarily paying at the same pace that we are increasing the quality. And this is a challenge.

So I would say a few things that we're working on. The first is it should be noted that the governor has proposed a 3 percent increase for school readiness (inaudible) and CDC (inaudible), the reimbursement rate, excuse me.

So there should be a 3 percent increase of school readiness and the child day care centers. It's not huge. It is above the cost of living increase. It's a first step in the right direction.

On top of that, the Childcare Union, part of that agreement there's an agreement to increase the reimbursement rate for Care 4 Kids, for

those providers who receive Care 4 Kids for their care, an increase of 3 percent over the next four years, so a total of 12 percent.

That not only affects the Childcare Union providers, those in that bargaining unit, but all providers who accept Care 4 Kids. I want to be very clear and go on record about this, because there's been some concern that it's only for the bargaining unit.

This will affect any provider who receives Care 4 Kids. They will receive a 3 percent increase this year, and so on for four years until we reach a 12 percent increase.

So those are some things that we're doing right now. The last thing I'll say to your point is part of Senate Bill 26 is the requirement that my office creates -- the Office of Early Childhood creates a plan for universal pre-K. They get universal access.

Part of that plan we will be looking at staff compensation, teachers' compensation and what the challenges are and what we need to do to address those challenges. So we are very aware of this.

I will say this is a long-view plan, but it's something that we are not looking away from.

REP. SANCHEZ: And I want to thank you for that answer, because I'm going to be asking this question every year until I get, you know, until I find out what teachers are going to -- I mean, if we're talking about quality and their qualifications, they deserve to get a little more pay as well.

So that's something that I'm going to continue asking you about. Thank you.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you. If I'm so fortunate to be here, I will have more and more better responses moving in the right direction for you.

REP. SANCHEZ: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Representative Sanchez.

Representative Lavielle to be followed by Senator Bartolomeo.

REP. LAVIELLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much for your presentation and for your progress up until this point. It's been very impressive, and it's obviously very important for all of education in the state, and a lot of other early childhood matters as well.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

REP. LAVIELLE: My question to you is very simple. Having had the let's say statutory request last year, and the bill that we're very familiar with and that was widely supported, are there any aspects of it apart from the two that we've just discussed, the inspections and the early childhood, the pre--kindergarten access, which is not technically I guess part of that bill.

Are there any other aspects that are different, that have changed, that you would like to alert us to so that we're aware of them. We supported the prior bill. What else should we know this time around?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you for that.

Senate Bill 25, it's a little confusing because they're both up at the same time, but Senate Bill 25 is very close, so almost identical to the uncalled amendment last year.

There are some technical changes; there are some changes with the dates. There is a change in DPH around a -- I won't even get this right -- but some chemical that we need to make sure we are testing for.

So there are those kind of technical fixes there. I do understand that we are looking at it and there's a way to make it a lot prettier, perhaps, and make it a little bit tighter. But the bill that you have before you is very close to what we discussed last year.

A few changes in dates, and I can get the exact changes for you in Section. Just it's really about changing dates mainly. But we can also get you -- we have a nice little grid. We can get that for you.

REP. LAVIELLE: Thank you. I have read it, but I'm always aware that there are things that I could have missed or something that should really stick out. But essentially then if I understand you correctly this does implement in a statutory context the Office of Early Childhood in the same way that it was meant to do last year?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes, that is correct.

REP. LAVIELLE: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Representative Lavielle.

Senator Bartolomeo, to be followed by Representative Ackert.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hi. The additional blocks for pre-K in Bill number 26 would be school readiness blocks. And so the definition of school readiness program is at least 2.5 hours a day for a child.

So are these slots that the governor is proposing through you and your office, are they be half-day pre-K slots, full day, combination? What do they look like?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you for that question.

The goal is two things, to support parent choice, so we know that there are parents who will choose part day for a number of reasons or will choose school day for a number of reasons, often financial. The reimbursements, they can pay less, for example,.

But we also know that full-day is a very good opportunity for children who need it. If they don't have care in another place or kind of back-up care, full day is an excellent opportunity for children.

So what we have is we have some flexibility there, with a focus on full day but it's not a requirement that it be funded only for full-day slots, full-day opportunities.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO: Thank you.

Then that leads me to what I was concerned about, and I just wanted to clarify first, so many districts and even alliance districts,

don't have full-day kindergarten.

So in Meriden, for instance, when the decision was made for full-day kindergarten to be universal and district-wide, they needed to eliminate the pre-K that the city had been doing before that in order to fund and staff the universal kindergarten.

So what then -- is there any thought given to how districts who may not have full-day kindergarten available would handle this if they have children going into full-day pre-K and then the option is not there for the full-day kindergarten, and are you as an office giving any thought to maybe looking to propose funding for universal kindergarten full day, which would seem, it almost seems its backwards.

It would almost seem that you would do the full-day kindergarten first and then bring up the pre-K. so I'm confused about the philosophy.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So there are a few things there that I will address. First, we obviously support -- not obviously but I will make this -- want to state that we support public schools providing care, and so we would not want to do anything that would dissuade them from doing this.

So these opportunities are open for school day. You know, if you have a school day program, which I know many communities do, that is definitely an option in terms of this expansion. Those communities could access these dollars.

And this is always done at the local level, the school (inaudible) the way they're set up is

through local control, if you will, local conversation, so they will find what's best for their communities. And so we want to support that.

In terms of funding for full-day pre-K, or full-day kindergarten, I beg your pardon, we are not there yet. That is not on the table. There is good news, though in the State of Connecticut. I wonder if I can dig up the numbers here. I have them somewhere.

The number of communities that are now providing full-day kindergarten has gone up quite a bit in the State of Connecticut, and in fact, I believe only four of our communities, in our lowest-income communities do not have full-day kindergarten.

So this is very good news. We are moving in the right direction there. But this is not part of this funding plan is not to fund full-day kindergarten right now.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO: So if those four districts that don't currently have it are part of the districts that would qualify for these additional slots, is there any provisions or thought about how to handle that when children are gonna possibly go full-day one year and then be downgraded, if you will, to half day the next year?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: You know, this is something that we would have to look at districts. And I know they have to make very difficult decisions. And so right now we are not proposing to fund full-day kindergarten. And I've heard this. You know, so we have children who will go from full-day three and four-year old programs when they're three and four and then they get to kindergarten and they have to do half a day.

This is a challenge, and I think we really have to just work with communities to figure that out. But that's not part of the plan right is to fund full-day kindergarten.

SENATOR BARTOLOMEO: And I support both as parent choice, and that's a pretty strong part of it, but it just seems in that regard to be a bit backwards and that concerns me.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yeah. I mean, I think again we want to encourage communities to make tough decisions, and obviously we want to support them in this. And I know this is something that communities really struggle with right now in Connecticut is getting the full day.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Senator.

Representative Ackert, to be followed by Representative Rojas.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good to see you.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

REP. ACKERT: Thanks for your testimony.

I do have a couple questions. I think when you have a great committee like we have here, a lot of them get checked off they go through my questions. So one of them, you brought up the additional licensing staff that's going to be checked in licensing. I think it totals approximately 19 from the numbers.

And was there going to -- and I can understand obviously the funding will have to follow that -- would there be any additional charges do you foresee for daycares themselves to cover the

cost of these like additional fees or anything?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: No. I do not anticipate providers, a fee or anything like that. that has not been part of our conversations at all.

REP. ACKERT: Great. Thanks. I just thought about that, that, you know, they're going to, you know, depending -- my wife had a daycare for about 10 years, and it got inspected. And it wasn't every year, every other approximately.

And I can see that, you know, them paying the fee to have people come inspect them, you know, but understand about that, and thank you.

I think the biggest thing that really I picked up on this bill that had a question on it, a concern actually. Is the seeking accreditation that is now in the I believe it's the Early Childhood Care Bill. I'm going through both books here as fast as I can, and they're quite lengthy.

But one of them, when we talk about NAEYC-approved providers, and I think the goal of this is to make sure that the ones that we're really supporting are approved providers, and now I see -- and it looks like, you know, with the slots, you're talking about 4,000 slots.

In there it's the beginning of the section for the expanding opportunities for early childhood, so 26. The first section, line 6, "Seeking accreditation means a school readiness program seeking accreditation" that we are now going to allow -- have to use slots, I believe, for schools that are seeking accreditation? Is that right?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes. So the language in Senate Bill 26 around seeking accreditation, I can see

why that might be confusing. And the goal of that was actually to clarify something that currently exists in statute.

And that is there are kind of three tiers for getting school readiness expansion. The first is if you are a program that is part of your community school readiness network, so you're already receiving school readiness funding, and you want to expand by a classroom or by a few opportunities for children.

You have to be NAEYC accredited, and then that's one way you can get expansion.

The other is if you are in your community, you're providing NAEYC accredited accreditation -- you're accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, but you are not part of that network, that school readiness network.

Then you can be brought into the fold. The community can do a needs assessment and say, you know, that program over there has really been wanting to get school readiness, and we have extra opportunities for children. Let's put them there. that's the other way.

The third that is actually currently in statute, that we want to clarify, is there are programs that are not accredited, and so they're not a part of the network, if you will. But they want to be. And they are committed to providing high-quality care.

What we're saying is -- and they have three years to do it in statute. You can become a school readiness provider if you go through the process and you become accredited within three years. So what we're saying is we're just making that clear.

If you are currently seeking accreditation, and you are doing this within three years, you can also be part of these expansion dollars. So it's about making sure that providers are committed to quality, but making it clear that if you're not part of this network already, that you can still be brought into the fold.

REP. ACKERT: Great. Thank you. That was the concern that I had as I was -- I didn't want us to, you know, not that I don't want to support others that aren't yet accredited, but that if these are existing programs, are already in place, that we would literally be harmed by not continuing to fund those and support those if they weren't yet accredited.

And then the final question actually is this on the Office of Early Childhood S.B. 25. It maintains the funding for pre-existing programs that have been prior to the acceptance of this. In other words, the ones -- we talked about it last year.

And this is just codifying those that were -- it continues funding the ones that are already existing, some of the smaller communities that receive about \$107,000, I believe, is the number for those. It continues to fund those in this bill.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Absolutely. And what it does do, so back in 25, and then in 26, it actually takes that cap, that \$107,000 cap off of competitive districts and says we actually would like to give more money and don't want to have a cap if we know that there's need, getting to Representative Fleischmann's, question, Chairman Fleischmann's, question.

That we want to make sure that we don't

unintentionally limit the opportunities for young children there. So that's another thing it does.

REP. ACKERT: Great. Thank you.

And I picked on the fact, and Senator Boucher was talking about the youth camps that are now going to be under the umbrella of Office of Early Childhood.

Many of the school programs are -- and I shouldn't say school programs, but town rec departments have youth camps. That would also be considered in that area. I don't know if they're really called -- they're called summer camps by most, and they do have names, but do they have some type of license or some type of accreditation?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So this is something I would be happy to get to back to you in greater detail. I know there are certain requirements of when a summer program must be licensed and when it does not need to be. And so I can definitely get that information and be very clear who falls under that legislation.

That would not change, but I can get that for you. I know we've had a conversation about that.

REP. ACKERT: Great. Thank you so much, and thank you for your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Representative Ackert.

Representative Rojas will be followed by Representative Kokoruda.

REP. ROJAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, Ms. Jones-Taylor.

Just a quick question. We've been talking a lot about school readiness programs. To what degree are we expecting some of these programs upholstery to be expanded into schools, into school buildings?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So there are school readiness programs that are currently operating in public schools. But, you know, there are other ways that public schools are providing pre-K opportunities for young children.

So through magnet, through charter or just through their own sheer will. So we know that there are communities that are actually funding their city's public school pre-K program.

So it's definitely a possibility there. you know, we really want to make sure that we have a system that's clear for public schools and for communities, community providers and everything. And really just thinking again about driving quality, so that all of our providers, regardless of where they're located, have access to a lot of the quality enhancement initiatives that we're undertaking.

REP. ROJAS: And, you know, I've reviewed the language quickly. But when you mentioned magnets, and here in the Greater Hartford area, we've had a huge expansion of pre-K 3 and pre-K 4 slots that have been part of kind of the magnet expansion.

And I guess my concern in that is that we've really limited the opportunity for low-income families to get into those, because they've been part of the lottery process. And quite

frankly, folks like me have been able to get free day care, and, you know, hopefully my wife isn't listening but I think we could afford day care for our children on our own, and certainly if it's coming at the expense of a low-income family.

And I want to know what kind of protections are in place to ensure that low-income families are really getting the access to these limited, high-quality slots as opposed to folks like me, who I believe's children are going to do pretty good on their own.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So I think, you know, many different communities have different practices. I know Hartford and New Haven, where I live, have big magnet programs that also provide pre-K. I will say, I will just speak to what we have in statute, and that is in school readiness in statute, 60 percent of the children who receive school readiness must be at 75 percent of the state median income or lower. And we are actually meeting that and surpassing it.

So the data that we have shows that actually 80 percent of our children who receive school readiness opportunities are at 50 percent of the state median income. So the lion's share of the children are low income.

And then about 12, I believe 12 percent or so are at 75 percent, between that 50 percent and 75 percent of state median income. And then the remaining are above 75 percent.

So with school readiness, we're actually doing very well by our targets in terms of making sure that we are reaching the lowest-income children.

REP. ROJAS: Thank you. That's very helpful.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Representative.

Representative Kokoruda, to be followed by
Representative Cook.

REP. KOKORUDA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good to see you.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

REP. KOKORUDA: You sound like you're working hard
and have come a long way since -- in the short
time you've been with the department, with the
new department.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

REP. KOKORUDA: A couple questions. You talked
about the collaboration with United Way and the
screening and all. Is this screening open to
all children in our state?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So we want all children to have
access to this. There are a few ways that you
can do it. So screening should be open to all
children, and it's really about information to
parents and information to providers and to
pediatricians.

So there are a few ways that you can do this.
One is a very simple tool that is used
nationwide. It's called the Ages and Stages
Questionnaire. And you can have it sent to
you. You can call the United Way, and they can
send it to.

You'll sign up and you'll say I have a three-

month old and you'll get a questionnaire in the mail at each significant developmental milestones of the child's life. And you can fill it out and see how your child is doing based on this tool.

And if you have concerns, then they will actually say we think you actually need to go maybe have a referral and see a provider who can address those concerns. So that is available.

What we know is that not all children are taking advantage of this. Not all families are taking advantage of this. So we're working with providers, with parents, providers and pediatricians to make sure that we increase the number of children who are screened, and that there's an appropriate referral and placement if necessary.

REP. KOKORUDA: So as far as working with the pediatricians, so that is being done state -- will be or is being done statewide?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes. We are in the beginning stages. We received a federal grant to work on this, to work on creating a comprehensive, statewide early screening system for Connecticut. And so it will take a while, but we are in development stages of that .

REP. KOKORUDA: Thank you.

And also, for someone who's not in this field at all, the accreditation process and the licensing process, could you tell us what the difference is and what -- I understand that home programs have to be licensed. Would a home program go to be accredited at all?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes. We would love to see that

happen. There are -- so licensing, that process is really looking at health and safety, making sure that children don't have access to hazards in the home, if there are chemicals, cords, all of the things that, you know, safe sweeping is something we want to look at.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: And that healthy snacks are provided, that they have a certain amount of physical activity during the day, and that there should be a standard age appropriate -- or not a standard, an age-appropriate curriculum available and planning.

That's the basic level of what we want to see with quality. We know that is the ground level. That is a very important milestone to reach for providers. Accreditation is much more rigorous, I would say. But there are -- there is a National Association for Family Childcare, and that is the accrediting body for home-based providers.

And that right now we have four in the state, I believe, and so we really with our technical assistance, with our quality enhancement system, one of our main goals is to actually increase that number through a lot of support.

REP. KOKORUDA: Thank you.

And just one comment. As you talked about the number of communities that do have whole-day kindergarten, I know in my community, one of the things that helped that was a decline in enrolment. It was an opportunity. We started as an opportunity. We had the space and we had staff as our numbers, especially in those lower grades, was going down.

And I think there are a lot of communities like mine that just were able to seize the moment

and institute full-day kindergarten.

So thank you, thank you for your work.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you both.

Representative Cook, to be followed by
Representative Johnson.

REP. COOK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hi, Myra.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Hello, thank you.

REP. COOK: I'm so very excited to be having this conversation, given what happened last year. And I first want to commend you on just the incredible knowledge and passion that you have for this.

You know, you went through the entire state over the last couple of years getting knowledge and educating yourself as to the needs and concerns of all of the workers, whether it be home daycare providers, state-funded centers, you know, in-school centers.

And I just think that it shows right now when we're having this conversation that your knowledge and passion for this just shows that this will be a very successful direction for the state to go in.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you very much for saying that.

REP. COOK: With that, I do have a couple of things. In line 600 of our OEC bill, it discusses the grandfather language. And I know there is some concerns about there's just a couple of words that are changed from the 2013 language to this

language.

I know that the desire would be to go back to the 2013 language, so it's something that I know that we can look at moving forward, and that's something we need to discuss here. But I just wanted to bring that to your attention.

You know as well as I that the last thing that we want to do is take people that have been in the field for so many years and force them to figure out a way to pay for school or go back to school, especially if they've been there for, you know, 30 or 40 years.

So the grandfather language is extremely important to me and something that we had pushed very hard for to stay last year.

The other thing, too, is we had discussed briefly a few minutes ago about the idea of more flexibility and I think that, you know, we hear people discuss the discrepancies of, you know, towns and poverty and the likes, and I just think that we need to realize that the flexibility that we can give to our children are what's important.

So however we can do that in working with our centers. We had a meeting this morning. I think that's very important that we listen to what their ideas are as well. As you had said, there's ways to tighten things up and clean things up a little bit moving forward.

That might be one of the areas, I think, that we can all come to the table and help improve this on.

So I just wanted to again commend you and bring those two things to the table and say I look forward to the rest of the ride. Thanks, Myra.

71
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you very much.

REP. COOK: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Okay. Next, Representative Johnson, followed by Paul Davis, and then we're going to have to move on because there are folks who are waiting and it's almost 1:30. Thank you.

REP. JOHNSON: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

And thank you so much, Myra Jones-Taylor, for your hard work on all these very important issues, making this big transition for us all in the State of Connecticut, something that is so important to people in my district and many districts that have an achievement gap issue.

And with that in mind, I noticed that in some of your testimony you were talking about the transition from the monitoring of the maternal infant and early childhood home visitation program to the Office of Early Childhood, and that there was a study that's being conducted at this point in time that will be ready in October 2014.

And I'm wondering could you just -- do you have a sense of how the transition will be going and what's going on now between your office and the Department of Public Health?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Yes. So there have been a few things. One thing of note that happened recently, so we have -- and I won't get too much into this, it's a very complicated system. But I want to say one thing.

First is that the McVeigh grant, the maternal infant early childhood home visiting grant, is

a federal grant. And while that is so critical that we think about it as it's been great for the state to have that infusion of money, we really need to think beyond a grant when we think about home visiting, and think about a system.

So this plan, it's part of 13-178. It was passed last year in legislation. We are creating a plan to get to a home visiting system for the state. So I wanted to make sure that that's clear. So that's one thing we're doing for planning.

In terms of planning that's already happened, one thing is that we had some staff who are DPH and some staff who are at DSS managing programs, and they would get together a little bit, but not as often as you would like. They are now working together as a team in preparation for this transition.

So I think that is a great sign. We've also been having conversations with HRSA, and I apologize for using an acronym but I can't drop that one for you. But Health Resources something. I can get back to you.

But they are the ones who fund this grant. And we've been having conversations about that transition, and they are confident that this is fine as long as we do not change anything in the grant, and the Office of Early Childhood has absolutely no intention of changing that grant.

REP. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you for that.

And just to follow up a little bit, I know that we're talking about the home visitation, but some of the Birth to 3 things that are going on now have been evaluation in terms of children

who might have some type of issues developmentally.

And I was wondering the vision of the governor and the Office of Early Childhood is to make sure access is available. Is there any more in the way of attention being given to those families that have those developmental issues? How will we balance that with the parents perhaps wanting to have the child at home?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So the Birth to 3, I truly hope will move to the Office of Early Childhood. We have a feasibility study that says it's feasible, that it makes sense. It is so important that we do not be two things outside of this system.

The first is that this is not just for three and four-year-olds, that we make sure that we are including infants and toddlers. The earlier the better, when we think about assistance. And that we are not thinking -- we are not forgetting about children with developmental delays, social/emotional needs.

And so making sure that they are fully integrated with our Office of Early Childhood is so important to me, and I think all the staff that I work with. So we are planning for that transition.

In terms of parent choice, I can speak to you in greater detail, perhaps, at another point just to think about supporting those parents. But this is something I am incredibly committed to, and very hopeful that this smoothes over.

REP. JOHNSON: Thank you so much, because I see this as an opportunity to provide more assistance to students before they get into the regular local educational system, and have them start on the

same footing as any other child would that didn't have maybe issues developmentally.

So thanks so much for your work and your good testimony.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you very much.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, Representative.

Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Good afternoon.

REP. DAVIS: And thank you for the work you've been doing.

Our committee in past years has grappled with the date for kindergarten readiness, currently January 1st according to statute. And I noticed in the legislation here, working with the Department of Education, you would like to develop a plan to move that to October 1st.

I'm not certain whether -- have you thought of any timeframe that that will be done, and what are some of the other conditions? And would you have to bring that, in fact, to us for an actual review of the statute and a change of the statute or does this actually permit you to do that once you've done the plan?

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: So I think to clarify the language of the plan is that we need to figure out what would work best for Connecticut. So I don't want to pre-empt it and say that we have

a foregone conclusion, but I think we should have a good sense of what that would look like if we were to change it to October 1st.

I will say this is something that we really have to be very planful and intentional of, because either way there are consequences, and I think unintended consequences that we may not even have anticipated yet.

So this is something that I know is so important to people, many people on this committee in particular. So I will say that, you know, we really have to be very careful. And I definitely think it would be absurd if we did not work with the legislature to come up with that plan and to make a real plan moving forward with you all.

REP. DAVIS: I do notice that you also include that -- our concern at least that students that didn't make that cutoff would now have an alternative in a pre-school.

So appreciate that and I appreciate all the work that you're doing. And I congratulate you and look forward to working with you more often. Thank you.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Thank you very much.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, Representative.

Thank you as well, and continued success and we'll, you know, continue to look at this bill and if it needs a little more tweaking we'll do that, or if you have some new information you need to share with us, please get it to us as soon as possible.

MYRA JONES-TAYLOR: Wonderful. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

handled by what kind of people, when the the (inaudible) should get involved, things like that.

The first year at the high school alone was a reduction of 78 percent. We went from 137 arrests down to 30 in our first year of implementation, and that trend has continued and we are still up in, you know, I think 69 percent the second year, and then in the 80 percent range for the first five months of this year as well, and it has also been the same with our middle school.

REP. ACKERT: Great. It will be a great model to follow. And thank you, and thank you, Representative Urban, on your comments. Because that's what I'm trying to dive down into. Sometimes we look at, you know, what we put on legislation. But what's the cause? What's the cause? And I never would have thought reading I could understand. But health issues, in that case.

But so thank you for your testimony.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, Representative.]

Any other questions? Thank you both.

REP. URBAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

ERICA BROMLEY: Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Next is Merrill Gay.

MERRILL GAY: Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, members of the committee.

SB25
SB26

My name is Merrill Gay. I'm the executive director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The alliance is a statewide advocacy

and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children birth to age eight in the areas of early learning, health, safety and economic security.

I'm here to testify in support of Senate Bill 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD, and Senate Bill 26, AN ACT EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.

The alliance has long supported creation of the Office of Early Childhood. We applaud this committee's work in getting that process started three years ago, and hope that this year we can actually finish the process.

The one piece that I want to mention in this as an area where there could be a little fine tuning is in the issue of grandfathering in existing staff.

We strongly support improving the quality of early childhood and understand the importance of having highly qualified teachers in the classrooms. We also strongly support expanding the opportunity so that more children can be served. And those can be contradictory things, especially if we tell a bunch of people who were doing the job now you can't do it anymore.

So we would really like to see that we have a way of grandfathering in the staff who are doing a good job now so that we are not setting up a workforce shortage.

The other bill that I want to talk about is Senate Bill 26, the act expanding early childhood opportunities. This is an important bill in that it does two big things. One is updating the school readiness law, and it does three key things there.

It makes it possible for more children in the alliance and competitive districts to attend preschool. So far 90 percent of the school readiness dollars have gone to the priority school districts. Over the last decade we've seen substantial suburbanization of poverty, where there are now poor children in lots of communities that we don't think of as poor.

And this will make it easier to get those early childhood opportunities into places where there are poor kids who haven't in the past been served.

The next thing it does is it makes it easier to raise the per-child reimbursement rates by taking the dollar reimbursement rate out of the law and instead of saying this is the rate, you can't pay less than this.

That means that in the future we can raise rates by putting it in the budget, as opposed to having to change the underlying law. And then the last thing it does on school readiness is requires the office to create a plan to get us towards universal pre-K, universal access to pre-K. that's important in that it actually articulates that this is a goal, and develops a plan to do it.

And I'd be happy to take any questions.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

I did want to ask one question. You mentioned in your testimony about urging us to support the grandfathering section and that you consider extending it, that we consider it extending it to include other staff with BAs as well. Could you give us an example?

MERRILL GAY: Sure. There are -- because we have the requirement that 50 percent of teachers have a BA and 50 percent have an associates this year, we forget that there are some people who are assistant teachers who already have a BA that may not be in early childhood. It may be a BA in English.

And they're working as an assistant teacher in that classroom because they love working with kids. And they would be the logical person to replace a head teacher who leaves in the middle of the year because they already know the kids. And to say that the people who are working as head teachers who have a BA in an unrelated area can be grandfathered, but their colleagues with the same degree credential shouldn't be is a little weird.

I know that some of our members, some of the early care providers would like to see that grandfathering broadened further to include staff who have been working in their centers for a long time who are unlikely to go back to college to get a degree because they're in their sixties and, just, you know, why do this for this job that pays very little anyway. But I'll let them talk about that, because they can talk firsthand.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Well, there are people who are an age higher than 60 that go back to school. So let's make that clear.

MERRILL GAY: I had a great-aunt who went back to school at I think something around 95.

SENATOR STILLMAN: See.

MERRILL GAY: Simply because she loved learning.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Yes, that's right. Now, would

you be suggesting that if they have so many years of experience and how many years would you be talking about? You know, staff that's been there working in early childhood for five years, 10 years. Do you have --

MERRILL GAY: I'm going to actually defer to some of my members who are going to testify later, who actually are running centers.

SENATOR STILLMAN: I was just curious, okay. Thank you.

MERRILL GAY: Yeah.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Questions?

Yes, Representative McCrory.

REP. MCCRORY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is just a philosophical question, and maybe it's in Senate Bill 25, 26. I'm all for expanding early educational opportunities for children. I think that's very low-hanging fruit and I think there wouldn't be anyone on this committee or whether in the state that wouldn't agree to this.

Is there anything in either one of these bills that you're advocating for that suggests that we might want to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs before we expand them? I think it would be very important that we evaluate which programs are actually working and working well for the children, so there is a benefit when they go on to pre-K or kindergarten before we just actually expand them.

Because expansion doesn't mean successful, and until we evaluate what we already have, it hard to make sense we do that very well first and

then look at what's working and what's not working. 'Cause you offer the opportunity to expand the exception of you know, teachers having a BS and they have an Associate's Degree.

But I don't even know if that's the right ticket or experience that's needed to working with that population. So do you know if evaluating programs are in this bill first?

MERRILL GAY: Yes. That's one of the things that the Office of Early Childhood would have as its mission is to develop a quality enhancement system and a quality enhancement and rating system that will look at what's the quality level in the various programs, and put in place a system to improve the quality.

REP. MCCRORY: So how do you determine, I mean, I don't know if you could -- I mean, I guess the staff will do that quality rating based on what?

MERRILL GAY: I think they're better able to explain all that piece to it.

REP. MCCRORY: That's fine. I'll talk to them. Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, sir.

Any other questions? Thank you very much.

MERRILL GAY: Sure.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Representative (inaudible)? Okay. I believe he's otherwise detained. John Cattelan, followed by Ray Rossomando.

Welcome.

107
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

JOHN CATTELAN: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Stillman, members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is John Cattelan. I'm here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The alliance represents 23 YMCAs across the State of Connecticut.

I'm here today to offer the alliance's support for Senate Bill 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD, and Senate Bill 26, AN ACT EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD.

Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs is a strong supporter of any effort that will increase affordability and the quality of childcare education. We believe these proposals are very positive steps.

Connecticut's YMCAs, without an Office of Early Childhood, received funding from three state agencies, so the coordinating of funding and delivery of services from one state agency is a proposal we support. In addition, we are encouraged by the proposals, investment and funds to improve the early childhood licensing system, and finance a structure to measure quality.

Finally we are encouraged by the proposal's expansion of the number of school readiness slots, increasing the reimbursement rate through this program. We are also supportive of the increased investment in the Care 4 Kids program, and the ultimate goal of universal preschool for all Connecticut children.

I don't believe it is necessary for me to

inform the members of this committee about the evidence that supports early childhood education.

YMCAs across Connecticut exist to strengthen our communities, and every day work with thousands of children, women and men to ensure everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

Thank you very much, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, sir. We are pleased to have the Y's support. Questions anyone?

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

You mentioned that the -- and good to see you.

JOHN CATTELAN: Thank you.

REP. ACKERT: You mentioned that your YMCA receives funding from three different state agencies now?

JOHN CATTELAN: Well, with the Office of Early Childhood it's transitioning -- we received funding -- we've had in the past from the State Department of Education, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Public Health, I believe.

REP. ACKERT: So with the consolidation, your funding would come from one source, streamlined?

JOHN CATTELAN: One source, yeah.

109
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

REP. ACKERT: More efficient?

JOHN CATTELAN: Oh, definitely. The Office of Early Childhood would be the sole funder, and you know, obviously from an administrative burden on our Ys it's obviously -- well, I think it's common sense. Obviously it's much easier to work with one agency instead of three different ones.

And there's even other programs and early childhood programs that actually receive their funding from five different state agencies, and we think there is a lot, so --

REP. ACKERT: Well, great. Thank you for your testimony.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

JOHN CATTELAN: Thank you, Representative.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, sir. Again we thank you for your testimony.

JOHN CATTELAN: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Ray Rossomando, followed by Juleen Flanigan.

Welcome.

RAY ROSSOMANDO: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, SB25 SB26
Senator Stillman and members of the Education HB5043 SB282
Committee. HB5356 HB5357

My name is Ray Rossomondo. I'm a research and policy specialist with the Connecticut Education Association. I'm here testifying on six bills today. And so I'll summarize our testimony.

Senate Bills 25 and 26 address the governor's early childhood proposals. We support those bills. We believe they'll go a long way toward achieving universal access to preschool. As we continue towards the goal, we ask this committee to continue its focus on high quality that begins with certified early educators.

We testify also in support of H.B. 5043 regarding the governor's budget, which primarily addresses magnet funding relating to Sheff O'Neill. CA commends the committee for long-term work reducing racial isolation through magnet expansion.

We want the committee to remember to take focus of other choice options that are being significantly funded in the state, and assess their impact on this goal as well of racial isolation.

Regarding Senate Bill 282, on teen dating curriculum and H.B. 5356, regarding social media curriculum, CA supports inclusion of these important issues in the teaching of the schools, but not as a mandate on the schools. We believe that the State Board of Education should be charged with developing model curricula as they've done with other topics, and make those curricula available for use by schools and teachers.

This is an efficient way for us to work together to try to get more of this instruction into the classrooms and integrate at the local level based upon what the local schools want to do and giving credence to the local decision-making.

And finally, we support H.B. 5357 regarding chronic absenteeism. When you prevent chronic absences you prevent dropout. Local education

111
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

authorities provide -- if local schools can provide sufficient support and resources, and these can be very affordable and very simple, we believe the long-term benefits will justify the minimal cost.

Again, I have submitted fuller testimony, and thank you for your time.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, sir. We appreciate the input of CEA on those bills.

Questions? Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you, Madam Chair, and great to see you.

There was an earlier testimony, and I just want to get your thoughts dealt with, and I think that many of us also believe that, you know, we're going to call them teachers, and some kind of a professional certification, training, goes along with that.

(SB25)
(SB26)

The gentleman brought up a point, though, about -- and primarily maybe because I'm looking at we're entering 2015 in terms of education year coming up, and people trying to get a Bachelor's degree by 2020, and some of those that even if you're, you know, 30 years old that you're working full time and trying to get certification if you want to maintain your job and stay in the, you know, teaching those young or taking care of those young.

Do you think that we have the workforce that can handle it, that might not be accredited by 2020?

RAY ROSSOMANDO: You know, it's a bit of a circular situation, I believe, in that without the higher required credential, it's more difficult

for staff to market themselves and to gain a livable wage based upon their training. That in and of itself should attract more people to the profession. Right now it's not paid very well, and so our lack of demand in the credentials seem to reinforce perhaps a supply issue in terms of not having enough people in those positions.

REP. ACKERT: Because I know that creating a -- well, we didn't create, but we encouraged having a teacher level, another one, that focused really on those younger learners, with our, you know, pre-K to third grade certification, you know, certification, you know, 'cause they are different than, you know, an eighth grader.

So I think that that would bode well. I hope that we can accomplish, you know, getting the certification, maybe with support from our community colleges, at least getting maybe an Associate's but moving on. But I wanted to get your input from the testimony.

And also, I've got to agree on S.B. 282, and House Bill 5356, I too believe that the -- it could be included in a health class or a curriculum that can be developed and put forth without having it be tagged. You know, we always love that mandate word.

You know, so I think there's a lot of opportunities, a lot of flexibility in, you know, these, and I always -- I crack up on the social media portion of it, education component of it. I think the kids could teach us. Never mind, I don't know how -- but I know what the value of it is.

You know, cyber bullying and things like that, so I do just want to comment on the fact that,

115
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

REP. LAVIELLE: Thank you. I do think it makes very, very good sense. I still have yet to meet many teachers who tell me they actually have time to teach everything that they are given to teach. And the disconnect that you mention between what we're asking the schools to be accountable for and then what we're asking them to do is getting larger.

So I appreciate your comments. I think they're quite eloquent and make a lot of logical sense. Thank you.

RAY ROSSOMANDO: Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, Representative.

Any other questions? Thank you.

RAY ROSSOMANDO: Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Good to see you again.

Juleen Flanigan, to be followed by Marissa Helm.

JULEEN FLANIGAN: Good afternoon.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Welcome.

JULEEN FLANIGAN: Senator Stillman and Education Committee members, I'm happy to be here today to support Senate Bill 25.

You have my testimony but given the questions that have transpired over this time I thought I would give you two personal experiences. One's an example of why I support the Office of Early Childhood, and also to the evaluation question that just came up a few minutes ago.

Recently -- I am the early childhood director

at Education Connection, which serves the northwest region of Connecticut. And recently in the last couple of months a childcare program in our area had a challenge with the NAEYC accreditation.

And if you lose your NAEYC accreditation in this system there are consequences. So at this particular center, they receive funding from school readiness, which used to be at the Department of Education, the state-funded centers, which used to be at the Department of Social Services. Both of those are now at the Office of Early Childhood. Care 4 Kids, which remains at Department of Social Services, chief of funding, because they were given bond money to build, accreditation facilitation support, which is with the Office of Early Childhood now, and parent fees.

So this is a typical program that's been in existence for many, many years. All these programs have developed over time based upon need or federal money or state money, and this is a lot to manage.

So when this happens, a challenge, this program is in a very dire state. The good news is that the Office of Early Childhood was really able to help us out. Think about that center. They have seven -- five or six different people they have to connect with at the state or the federal level.

The Office of Early Childhood, because several of these programs are now in that setting, were able to work together with the community and with the program, which really minimized the amount of work that had to be done. So that program was able to get back on their feet in a much, much faster and a more economical manner.

Otherwise -- and they were calling me in to help them, so if the office wasn't there I would be calling those places too, and helping. So that's one of the big reasons it is just so powerful. I really believe personally that over time the Office of Early Childhood is not only going to be more efficient and effective, but I think it's going to save us money.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you very much much. We appreciate it.

Questions? Representative McCrory.

REP. MCCRORY: You wanted to talk a little bit about the rating?

JULEEN FLANIGAN: The evaluation, yeah. I think it's such a critical part of a quality system. And as I think of it, I think of it in two ways, evaluating the progress that the children are making, and evaluating the actual system, the teachers, the programs, all of that. And some of that work is being done in part right now, but the data part regarding the children I find to be the most challenging because to really to see if these children are becoming ready to school it transfers into the State Department of Education to see how they are doing in kindergarten and how they are thriving.

So there have been not too many school districts in Connecticut who have been able to bridge that agreement with the pre-K and the public school to get data. Now, it's not like we want to -- it's not like we necessarily want control groups of these kids, children who don't experience the quality education and others, but it's the only way that we have right now.

So for instance, in Danbury, which is one of the communities that I work with, in collaboration with the public school we were able to track data of children in the quality programs from third grade. These are full-day, full-year programs children, from pre-K, from three years old, up to third grade.

And we saw wonderful outcomes, and particularly we saw very strong outcomes for children who come from non-English speaking families that you could see over time, not only did they reach their English-speaking peers but in some cases surpassed them.

So but that takes a lot of work, and it takes a lot of collaboration with the school district, who's already burdened with everything else. But the other thing that the department is doing in terms of teacher performance and quality teachers, is to really -- they've really adopted a consistent format where they do training, group training, and then follow it up with in-classroom coaching.

It's the most effective thing that's happened: So there's one-on-one observation in the classroom by a qualified trainer, and then meeting one-on-one with that teacher to problem solve some of those issues. So that's a quality evaluation system. We don't have data on that, but that's really how they are working now in the field in early childhood to be working one-on-one with the teachers.

REP. MCCRORY: Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, sir.

And thank you. We appreciate it.

JULEEN FLANIGAN: Thank you very much.

121
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

appreciate the work that you do, and coming to us with important resolutions to problems.

Questions? Okay, we have your testimony, and thank you for pointing out the bill in Judiciary for those members who were not aware of it.

MARISSA HELM: Okay.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you.

MARISSA HELM: Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Edie Joseph? Edie Joseph here?

Liz Frazier? Here comes Liz. Followed by Rick Porth. Is Rick here? Ah, good.

LIZ FRAZIER: Good afternoon, Senator Stillman and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Elizabeth Frazier, and I am a policy analyst with the Connecticut Association for Human Services. CAHS works to reduce poverty and promote economic success through both policy and program work, and I am testifying today in support of S.B. 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD, and S.B. 26, AN ACT EXPANDING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.

One of the most promising achievements from the 2013 legislative session was the work done towards creating the Office of Early Childhood, and this initiative unifies a cadre of disconnected programs across agencies into a single focused and really important and accountable system.

It is encouraging that the process of merging both programs and funding streams into the

Office of Early Childhood is well underway. However, the accomplishments to date and future initiatives will not be secure until the office is codified by statute.

CAHS fully supports S.B. 25. We believe that the system being developed provides a deliberate strategy that will be of benefit to program's families, and most importantly to children. The future unified data and collection reporting system will provide direction and accountability towards results.

With the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood, early childhood issues, protocol and best practice have been lifted into Connecticut's education conversation. So now is the time to expeditiously vote the Office of Early Childhood expeditiously, excuse me, vote the Office of Early Childhood into Connecticut statute so that the positive changes that are in process are permanently established as part of Connecticut's system.

As far as S.B. 26, CAHS supports the concept that all children should be afforded to right to high-quality learning experiences, and with this in mind, we strongly support Governor Malloy's vision of universal access to preschool.

S.B. 26, which allows for the creation of over 1,000 new school readiness plots, is a positive step in this direction. In addition, a specification to extend the reach of these plots into alliance and competitive districts targets many children who to this point have not had access to affordable programs of high quality.

CAHS is excited that Connecticut is poised to take ambitious steps towards equalizing the

societal structure of early care and education. And research clearly links the gains made in early children to children's future successes.

As our knowledge about the benefits of early education are being influenced by research, so should our actions and policies.

Thank you for your consideration, and in here also we just ask that as Representative Fleischmann mentioned, there might need to be some flexibility in how the slots are being delivered so that all children have access and that we can make sure that our capacity is reached in an intentional manner.

We also support grandfathering language.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you very much.

Questions? Thank you.

LIZ FRAZIER: You're welcome.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Next Rick Porth, to be followed by Fred Jackson. Mr. Jackson here? Oh, there he is.

RICK PORTH: Thanks, Senator Stillman and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Richard Porth, and I serve as CEO of United Way of Connecticut. And we provide this testimony in support of S.B. 25 and 26. In particular we'll talk today about AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

And it's provided on behalf of all of Connecticut's United Ways, 15 local United Ways, and United Way of Connecticut.

We have a long history in the United Way

movement of providing support for local early childhood programs in Connecticut. In FY '13 local United Ways invested more than \$4.2 million in funding for early childhood, supporting a range of initiatives including helping to create new slots, or subsidized slots for children in need, improving the quality of child care at the local level, and many other initiatives as well.

United Way of Connecticut serves as the state association of the 15 local United Ways, but we're also proud to be a partner with the state government in providing early childhood services, including 211 childcare, which is the state's childcare resource and referral system, child development info line, which is the main access point for parents seeking help from Help Me Grow, and Birth to 3 and Care 4 Kids, the childcare subsidy program of the state.

And I mention that because we've learned all of us in the United Way system across the state over many years the importance of collaboration and coordination both at the statewide level, but also at the regional and local level. And so we are enthusiastically in support of the creation of the Office of Early Childhood, which we believe will go a long way towards achieving that kind of collaboration.

Earlier in the testimony provided today, there was mention of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Assistance Program. I think Myra Jones-Taylor mentioned it, and we're privileged to be partners with the Office of Early Childhood on that, and excited about the prospect of taking lots of good services and helping coordinate it across the state and across different systems within early childhood to provide better outcomes for kids and their families when need is identified in these early

assessments.

We have been able to watch firsthand over the last year or so the really great leadership being provided by Myra Jones-Taylor and other leaders in the Office of Early Childhood. We applaud them. We applaud the proponents of early childhood services within the legislature, and the governor for his recommendation on this office and on S.B. 26.

We stand ready to support the state and the new office in whatever way we can, and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, sir. We appreciate it.

Some hands, I can't -- oh, Representative Kokoruda followed by Representative Ackert.

REP. KOKORUDA: Thank you very much. Today earlier when we talked to Dr. Taylor, Jones-Taylor, I guess, I've got it right. And we talked about screening, and she singled out your organization. Is that something that the United Way is involved in now, screening before this new office? And how do you see it changing or growing or expanding under this?

RICK PORTH: We have a service in the United Way of Connecticut called Child Development Info Line, and again, it's the entry point for parents and caregivers who are looking for help through the Birth to 3 system, not the exclusive one, but one of the primary entry points.

And also the place where parents go to for Help Me Grow services. And we're proud to say that we serve a lot of families every year, but we think that with the new Office of Early Childhood, and the new leadership in the Office

of Early Childhood through this early childhood comprehensive systems grant that Myra Jones-Taylor mentioned with HRSA, there's the opportunity to expand significantly the number of screenings though Ages and Stages, and by other means, and also doing better at making sure when a need is identified that the child and his or her family will have an easier time finding the service they need. Sure.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. And again, as we have good committee members, they steal your questions. So I just wanted to I guess reiterate \$4.2 million, first thank you for your commitment to early child care and education. And it sounds like you answered the question that I was going to ask is that your continued support with United Way will remain there, and I truly appreciate that. So thank you.

RICK PORTH: Absolutely. Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Anyone else? Thank you.

RICK PORTH: Thanks.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Fred Jackson, followed by Richard Murray.

SB25

FRED JACKSON: Senator Stillman, members of the committee.

My name is Fred Jackson and I come before your committee wearing several hats. I represent the Social Justice Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, serve on the steering committee of the Early Childhood Alliance, and on the board of St. John's childcare center, and I'm a member of the Bridgeport School Readiness Council.

They say I'm retired but I haven't figured out how to do that yet. My objection today is to convey strong support for S.B. 25. I've worked on 11181, I've worked on the support of the bill last year, and I must commend you for your work on that issue. Unfortunately somewhere in the cracks it fell through, but we are now challenged to complete that act.

In 2014, the importance of early childhood is more widely accepted than it was eight years ago, when I found myself the only businessman locked up with 60 experts in childcare coming up with the blueprint for Bridgeport (inaudible).

As one of the founders of and a former co-chair of the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children, which came out of that effort, I now know full well the importance of the first five years of life. The challenge for Connecticut is to take that non-system spread across multiple agencies and to create something that's effective and efficient.

And in our view, codifying the Office of Early Childhood created by the executive order will assure that they will be able to tackle their most significant challenge, that is, the coordination of childcare programs, once spread out of a number of large agencies.

For example, a program of major importance to families like Care 4 Kids is not exactly a major portion of the DSS mandate. Yet when it comes into OEC, it becomes a major focus, allowing coordination with programs such as school readiness and other services to children.

I'd note that the Care 4 Kids is the major funder of our center's Infant and Toddler

program, which primarily serves low-income working parents. I think we have four languages now we serve in the downtown Bridgeport area.

So improving its efficiency and effectiveness and, I might say, its rates, are a key concern for us. One element of S.B. 25 I bring to your attention is the grandfathering that's been discussed previously. And there we'd like to see the same language that was in 2013's bill rather than the current, more restrictive language.

And the last thing I'd say is please keep in mind the need to look at the work of the local early childhood collaborative active in many of our towns and cities, at some hopefully not-too-distant time such an examination should include how best to expand and support their efforts and how their voices might be better heard in places like the Office of Early Childhood.

REP. MCCRORY: Thank you. Any questions?

Yes, Representative.

REP. KOKORUDA: Thank you. Just that last comment you made, should we be concerned that your organizations don't feel they are being heard, and is there something we can do to make that happen?

FRED JACKSON: If you look at 11181, it specifically called for the planner, to consider the best way to do that. Unfortunately the time the planner had and the other major challenges, that part was not addressed. And all we're asking is that as you work through, I doubt maybe this session, but we set in process how best to do that, we have a lot of ideas and we'd like to

work with the committee and the OEC on how best to do that.

But there's a lot of work that gets done in local cities with money raised locally, and that we think we have developed an operation that needs to be recognized and supported.

REP. KOKORUDA: May I just add that everything we've heard about this new office I think that will happen, and we certainly will urge it, but I think there's been so much to do this first year.

FRED JACKSON: That's why I put it that way, and we greatly respect Dr. Jones-Taylor. I have worked with her closely. It's just as things go by, we don't want to get lost.

REP. KOKORUDA: Well, thank you. And thanks for all your whole life's work. Thank you so much.

REP. MCCRORY: Thank you for your testimony.

Next we have Rich -- no, I'm sorry. Richard Murray.

RICHARD MURRAY: Thank you, members of the Education Committee for allowing me to testify.

My name is Richard Murray. I'm a member of the Killingly Board of Education, and I am president of CAFE. I'm here in support of H.B. 5043, which continues to demonstrate the governor's support for public education despite the state's fiscal constraints.

CAFE appreciates the support of the governor, and the legislature, to provide increases in education funding during the last three years, making Connecticut one of the only states to do so.

SB25

SB26

HB5355

131
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

increase IDEA funding.

I'm also here in support of S.B. 26 and S.B. 25, which in the long run will help decrease special ed costs. Thank you.

REP. MCCRORY: Thank you. Any questions?

Yes. Sorry.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just I see the one that you didn't get to, H.B. 5355. It looks like you support it in the beginning of it, but then on the end maybe there was a component that you don't support? Is that right? Of the ACT CONCERNING BOARDS OF EDUCATION SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS. Am I reading that wrong?

RICHARD MURRAY: We're just concerned about the additional data reporting concerning suspensions, expulsions and arrests places an additional burden on districts.

REP. ACKERT: Okay. Is there a reporting that is done now at all or --

RICHARD MURRAY: I don't actually know. I can get back to you on that.

REP. ACKERT: Yes, I was just curious. Yeah, I just want to know because there was a lot of support on it, but you know, obviously we talked about mandating districts to do something and then we'd call it and we don't give the dollars for the support on it.

So I just caught that at the end, but I do appreciate your support of the other legislation. Thank you.

that there's a collaboration when there -- so for example, we talked about preschools in the public schools. We want to make sure that our Office of Early Childhood and our schools are all having discussion, that we're not siloing the kinds of things that we're doing.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: It makes good sense. Thank you.

Any other questions from members of the committee?

If not, thank you very much for your testimony and your patience.

REGINA BIRDSELL: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Randy Collins, to be followed by Rachel Weld.

You don't look like Randy Collins, but please give your name and --

RANDY COLLINS: Well, actually I am.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Oh, I'm sorry. There's two Randy Collins in the building at the same time.

RANDY COLLINS: (Inaudible).

REP. FLEISCHMANN: My sincere apologies, sir.

RANDY COLLINS: No problem. But you do look like Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Glad to hear it.

RANDY COLLINS: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about some bills. My name is, in fact, Randy Collins, and I'm staff associate for public policy at CAS.

HB 5043
SB 25

I'm going to speak to you on just a couple bills today. You have written testimony from our executive director, Dr. Sarah Solo (phonetic), on the governor's budget bill and the Department of Early Childhood Education.

HB 5043

I'm going to abbreviate the testimony on the budget bill because you've heard it already, and I just wanted to go on record as supporting other organizations who have asked for a 3 percent increase in the ECS.

As you know, budgets have been tight for many years. The last three years has been good years, relatively good years for education. But prior to that were four years of flat funding and we still haven't recovered in terms of that.

Secondly, the excess cost grant really should be uncapped. It's costing some very small assistance in the northeast and other areas, I suppose, but I know about the northeast, a substantial sum of money. And so we also support excess cost grant being uncapped.

The one area in the governor's budget that has not been mentioned that remember, and that is the school security grants. CAS supports the school security grants. Following the unspeakable episode at Sandy Hook, many school systems undertook a review of their security measures, have done yeoman's work in that, but cannot really afford to implement on their own. Many communities can't afford to implement on their own.

SB 25

The second issue that I want to speak about is the Department of Early Childhood Education. Prior to serving as the superintendent, which I did for 30 years, the last 20 in Waterford, I taught preschool when I began my career. And

this bill is critical, I think, to the educate, to preschool education in the State of Connecticut.

If we don't address all the factors that affect children's learning early on, then in fact many of them never catch up. And no community can really address this by themselves without some support from the State Department.

The one thing I would be concerned about and would mention is the -- already? I think I took up time with you --

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Please. Go ahead and finish your sentence and paragraph, Mr. Collins.

RANDY COLLINS: The quality of preschool education, but also the fact that we would like some coordination between the Department of Early Childhood Education and the State Department of Education so that we're not answering to two agencies within the same area.

And I'd be glad to answer any questions.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you for your testimony on all of those bills.

Are there questions from members of the committee? If not, thank you very much for your time and patience and testimony.

RANDY COLLINS: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Rachel Wilf, to be followed by Jeff Viller of the Connecticut Council, to be followed by Jim Finley.

RACHEL WILF: Good afternoon, Chairman Fleischmann and the members of the committee.

SB25

My name is Rachel Wilf, and I'm a policy fellow at All Our Kin. We are a nationally recognized Connecticut-based nonprofit that trains the court family childcare providers. We work directly with over 250 parents and educators, serving over 1,200 children in the greater Bridgeport, greater New Haven and Norwalk areas.

I'm here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. We believe that the Office of Early Childhood is the most effective mechanism for creating a system that ensures quality in all childcare settings, and provides information and access for all of Connecticut's families.

At All Our Kin, we see firsthand the difficulties families face as they search for affordable, accessible, quality childcare options. Parent support at the state's early childhood system is confusing and overwhelming. They tell us that they do not know where to go to get the information that they need, and that they've become discouraged and exhausted in their attempts to navigate the current system.

We also see the need for a unified system for providers, especially family childcare providers. Too often these providers are forgotten or left out of professional development opportunities and funding streams that can raise the quality of their work.

Yet family childcare plays a crucial role in our state. These providers are caregivers of Connecticut's youngest and most vulnerable children. Our state faces an acute shortage of quality childcare for infants and toddlers, and this shortage especially affects low-income families.

In these conditions of scarcity, family childcare providers, both licensed and unlicensed are essentially to meeting the need for infant and toddler care, as well as the need for affordable second and third-shift and culturally diverse care.

At All Our Kindergarten, we have shown that with sufficient investment, incentives and support, family childcare programs can meet high levels of quality. However, for providers to meet the levels of quality that all of Connecticut's children need and deserve, we must create an early childhood system in which these essential caregivers and included as full participants.

We believe that the Office of Early Childhood is ideally situated to lead our state toward creating such a system. In the future, we expect that the office will take the lead on issues including licensing and professional development for providers, family engagement, and the creation of early screening and referral systems and coordination of data collection.

These steps are essential if we are to create comprehensive, coordinated system of programs and services for all of Connecticut's children. Again we believe that the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood is crucial to the well being of children, families and childcare providers across Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you for your testimony and your advocacy and your brevity, and for a position that I think is agreed to by virtually all the members of the committee. But it's

great to hear from a grass roots advocate like yourself. Thank you.

RACHEL WILF: Thanks.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Any questions?

Thank you.

Jeffrey Villar, to be followed by Jim Finley, to be followed by Joe if he's still here.

JEFFREY VILLAR: Good afternoon, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee.

My name is Jeffrey Villar. I'm here as a former superintendent of schools, and now the executive director of the Connecticut Council for Education Reform. You have my comments before you, so I'm going to try to be very brief, recognizing you've been here all day for sure.

CCR supports S.B. 25, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. We believe it creates a coordinated system of high-quality early childhood education in the state. We believe also that the creation of a longitudinal data system will help the state assure and measure quality of early childhood programs.

And also, the quality rating and improvement system, the QRS that is recommended, will also be a system that will improve the quality of preschool by providing multiple levels of support, incentives and professional development for our professionals in the early childhood field.

(SB 26)

CCR also supports S.B. 36, AN ACT OF EXPANDING

How did you and your organization come to the conclusion that 5,500 slots were needed?

JEFFREY VILLAR: What I'd like to do is I can ask my research consultant that worked with us to produce the formula, and I can happily share that with you and the committee so that you can see the breakdown.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: I think that would be very helpful.

JEFFREY VILLAR: Excellent.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Okay.

Any other questions from members of the committee? If not, thank you very much for your testimony and your advocacy and your patience.

JEFFREY VILLAR: Thank you very much. Have a good afternoon.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Good afternoon.

Jim Finley, to be followed by Joe Surasulo, to be followed by Jen Alexander.

JIM FINLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Education Committee. My name is Jim Finley. I'm here today representing the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding. I am a pro bono consultant to that coalition.

As you know, that coalition has been working for nine years to try to convince the Connecticut courts to compel the State of Connecticut to live up to its constitutional funding responsibilities to the public school children of Connecticut.

That day of trial is finally on the horizon. In September of this year we will actually hear the merits of our case, and we're thrilled about that.

We're here today to talk about early childhood, and the fact that early childhood education has a direct linkage to successful education outlets, outcomes. And Bills 25 and 26 are good proposals. We appreciate the fact that the governor and the legislature, particularly this committee, has taken the lead in promoting early childhood education.

But the fact of the matter is there's a disconnect between state policy approaches in regard to early childhood education. The attorney general's office representing the interests of the State of Connecticut has repeatedly tried to prevent information linking early childhood education and successful outcomes in the K through 12 public school environment.

The CHF lawsuit is not only one about adequacy, but also about preschool students' rights under the Connecticut Constitution. And study after study has repeatedly shown as folks that have testified before me have indicated, that early childhood education is essential to success. It's essential to dealing with the achievement gap that exists in Connecticut.

So we're here today to be supportive of more significant investments in early childhood. There is no question that that is an integral part of a child's ability to succeed in the public school environment, and you have an expert in our testimony from an unpublished, yet unpublished report that critiques Connecticut's attempts at early childhood education as being too weak and not broad

enough.

And as the previous speaker indicated, we believe that early childhood education should be expanded across Connecticut. Almost every community in Connecticut has pockets of poverty, and students that could benefit from such services.

Thank you very much for your time. I'd be glad to answer any questions.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you for your well-timed testimony.

Are there questions or comments from members of the committee? If not, we thank you for your testimony and your advocacy.

JIM FINLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, members of the committee.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Is Joe Surasolo still here?

If he's not, then Jen Alexander. Your time has finally arrived.

JEN ALEXANDER: Good afternoon, Representative Fleischmann and members of the committee.

SB25

SB26

Thanks for hanging in there through a long afternoon, and for the opportunity to provide testimony on two bills, regarding the Office of Early Childhood and expanding early childhood education.

My name is Jennifer Alexander and I'm the CEO of ConnCAN. I'm particularly happy to be here as the mom of a preschooler and a 1st grader.

ConnCAN works every day to make sure that all kids in Connecticut get the opportunity to

attend a high-quality school no matter where they live. and to meet that goal, we clearly have to start by providing a great education early in our child's life.

Unfortunately that's not happening in Connecticut today. Right now we know that more than 4,000 three and four-year olds in Connecticut do not have access to preschool. Only one out of three African-American, Hispanic or low-income third graders in Connecticut is reading at grade level.

And the research is clear that if a student is not reading at grade level by the end of third grade, they're four times more likely not to graduate from high school on time.

Too many kids in our state are not getting the solid start that they need. We can and we must do better by improving access to quality early childhood education.

The two measures before you today codifying the Office of Early Childhood Education, and enacting policy to help expand quality pre-K programs will do just that.

Investing in quality preschool makes sense for kids. Research shows that on average children who have access to preschool programs gain about one-third of a year of additional learning across language, reading and math skills.

In some cases, preschool programs have enhanced kids' reading skills between a half and a full year of additional learning in reading and math.

Investing in preschool also makes sense for our economy. Research shows that every dollar

spent on preschool programs, for every dollar spent on preschool programs, the state can save anywhere from \$3 to \$7.

So we have a choice. We can pay for a high-quality preschool now or we can pay a much higher price later. For example, we know that the rate of incarceration from felony convictions is one-third less among low-income who received access to a preschool experience.

As we expand these options, we need the Office of Early Childhood Education to consolidate efforts that have been scattered across agencies to better serve kids. This new office must ensure a strong infrastructure to effectively align state resources and supports, improve family outreach and information, and ensure the quality of programs that will prepare more youngsters for kindergarten and beyond.

I urge members of this committee to support the expansion of early childhood programs, and to codify the Office of Early Childhood Education. These efforts will ensure that more children across our state, particularly those who need it most, receive the strong start they need to succeed later in life, and will help make certain that our state is a place where people can live, work and thrive.

Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you for that articulate and well-timed testimony.

A question for you about a topic that you touched on and a bill that you did not. So understandably one of the reasons that you support both the Office of Early Childhood and expansion of preschool seats is the data that

shows improvement in the likelihood that a child is reading at grade level by grade three, and likely to graduate high school.

Recent studies have shown that the single most powerful predictor of whether a child will not reach grade-level reading at third grade and may not graduate high school is chronic absenteeism.

And we do have a bill on our agenda today that would start to address that problem initially by requiring districts to figure out whether they have a problem, to measure chronic absenteeism and to put together a group to address it if they pass a certain threshold.

I'm just wondering if ConnCAN has any opinion on that issue and that bill.

JEN ALEXANDER: We looked closely at what other states had been doing on this issue, so I think condo association is one sign of a number of signs that are an indicator that a child is at risk for not hitting critical benchmarks that we know will set them up for success.

So for example, Massachusetts has set up something called an early warning indicator system, that looks at absentee rates and a whole bunch of other things. And has created a system, districts can opt into it and use it to flag a child that's at risk of falling behind.

So I think absenteeism is one of many important factors that needs to be looked at to try and catch kids before it's too late and before they sort of fall too far behind.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: So are you saying you support this measure, or you support some steps? I'm just wondering how you translate that

observation into policy?

JEN ALEXANDER: I think this measure takes some important steps, but I think absenteeism is one of many factors that we have to look at in terms of identifying kids that are falling behind.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Well, we can talk at some point after this hearing. The latest study showed that actually if you want to predict a child's likelihood of graduating high school it is more powerful to look at their level of attendance in eighth grade than it is to look at their GPA.

A child who is chronically absent in eighth grade is most likely to drop out, more so than the child who has a lower GPA but better attendance. So I would (inaudible) that it's more than one factor, it is a key factor.

JEN ALEXANDER: Yeah. I mean, third grade reading score is certainly another, are another indicator, and I believe I've seen research that also shows that eighth grade math scores are another indicator of a child being at risk.

So we could give you some examples of what Massachusetts has done in sort of flagging based on research and number of indicators, to help them identify --

REP. FLEISCHMANN: I would love to see the Massachusetts methods. I mean, the fact is that one of the best predictors of attainment of grade-level reading by third grade is kindergarten attendance period. Not kindergarten marks, not anything else, just is the child making over 90 percent attendance in kindergarten.

161
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

But I'd love to see what kind of work they've done in Massachusetts that you'd want to share with us.

JEN ALEXANDER: Sure.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Other questions from members of the committee?

If not, I thank you for your testimony, your time and your patience with my questions.

Bill Davenport, to be followed by Michelle Mullins.

BILL DAVENPORT: Good afternoon, Representative Fleischmann and committee members. My name is Bill Davenport, and I'm in my 28th year as an agro science teacher and the director of the program at the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience Program in Woodbury.

We have 340 students in the program. It's 40 percent of the high school, and we have 23 towns that sent students to us, and this year I had to once again -- we had 180 applications and I had to sent 90 wait list or refusals because of room because of funding.

And as many of you know, I'm here for the Bill 5043, the governor's budget bill for the second year. And I am here to ask that you'd honor the ECS task force recommendations to phase in a \$3 million a year increase over four years.

And the first 3 million was put in for the first year, but the second 3 million was left out. So we're flat funded this year, as compared to magnets, charters and vo tech all got incrassates for the second year, and I think it just was forgotten about because it's a smaller piece of the pie.

171
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

not happening.

So if you want to continue on and add to whatever I have to say or just tell me yeah, thank you, then I'll shut it down, but --

MICHELLE MULLINS: I'll just say one thing is that it's not the school's sole responsibility. The school just plays a part. and there are other people who have a responsibility. Yes, parents have a responsibility, but I do believe and I have been involved in wraparound services, who can assist children.

And I'm not talking about -- when I say mentoring, I'm not talking about a mentor that would see this child once a week. I know mentor agencies who basically move into the houses of these children and become big brothers and big sisters and can provide life skills, help parents. They go above and beyond what a normal mentor would do.

So the school just has one small responsibility, and I think that this bill would require the school to maintain data and do something with the data other than just collecting paper, but when you start linking -- requiring the school to link the students with outside community resources, I think that will go a long way in helping solve the absentee issue. And helping to prevent these children from entering the juvenile justice system so early.

REP. MCCRORY: I think you did a great job of answering that question. Thank you very much.

Anyone else have a question? Okay.

MICHELLE MULLINS: Thank you.

REP. MCCRORY: And I'm going to butcher your name, so Joe Babrocheck? Is Joe here?

Ms. Ellsworth from Eastward Readiness Council? Is she here?

Jennifer from CBIA. Here comes Jennifer. Come on down.

JENNIFER HERZ: Good afternoon.

Representative McCrory, Representative Ackert and members of the committee, I am Jennifer Herz on the distinct council with CBIA. And I am here to testify in support of two bills on your agenda, S.B. 25 and S.B. 26. One establishing the Office of Early Childhood, and the other for expanding opportunities of pre-K.

I submitted written testimony, but I just wanted to highlight a few things from that written testimony. One is CBIA is a top priority for us is making sure we have a workforce that's ready for the 21st century.

And we know that quality preschool programs can achieve that, because kids then enter kindergarten ready to learn. And to that end, we believe the Office of Early Childhood would provide a strong base, a strong infrastructure to make sure that these preschool programs are implemented the way they need to be, with the expertise and the experience to make it happen.

We really want to make sure we emphasize the quality aspect of these preschool programs, and that parents have the tools they need to assess the programs, to make sure they can make the right choices for their kids.

So I don't have too much more to say beyond that. We just really want to express our

support and emphasize the workforce needs that we really think this will create the supply line for that talent moving forward.

I'll be happy to answer any question that you may have.

REP. MCCRORY: Representative?

REP. ACKERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I think the workforce key concern or issue is brought up in this bill in a way. We understand, you know, the value of early childhood, as you do.

I think that the key, one of the areas now that we're looking at though is trying to get a lot of certification done, and I think a lot of people working in the workforce, that are working now it may be a struggle to get to that level.

I don't know. I don't know if there's research been done and I think that's something for all the organizations to think about. Can we get the quality of workforce that we're asking in that legislation in the Office of Early Childhood, get that Bachelor's degree or certification.

So I think it's something that your organization, you know, and all others, especially of our higher ed need to accomplish getting this. By 2020 there's a lot of people that need to be certified if they're going to get state funds.

So I don't know if you have a comment to that, but I just want to bring that concern to your organization too that, you know, we talk about creating a strong workforce. It's actually

having the bodies to fill these slots too, and get accredited in that timeframe.

JENNIFER HERZ: Absolutely. You know, I heard from somebody early to the same point, and unfortunately I don't have any more stats here at this time. I would be happy to go back and deliver more research on that.

But I couldn't agree more. I mean, this is obviously a cyclical type of thing, so we need to have the higher education in place to make sure that we have the teachers that are prepared to make sure we have the quality programming.

So I absolutely see your point and, you know, it comes from both ends.

REP. ACKERT: And if you do have the resources or, you know, somebody does, it would be great to see -- have an analysis of what we have, looking at this bill, is it accomplishable with Connecticut residents?

I'd love to, you know, get Connecticut, you know, residents working and certified, you know, especially for the, you know, teaching our youngest.

So if there's a way that you can, and you know, obviously go through the ranking member, you know, I don't know if there's a way we can analyze if we have the body of teachers out there or going to be accredited teachers or people transitioning from the workforce to get accredited, you know, better paying jobs and better for our children.

So if you can find that information I'd appreciate it and I think others.

175
lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014
11:30 A.M.

JENNIFER HERZ: Absolutely. I will certainly look and follow up with you, as well as the chairs and the ranking member.

REP. MCCRORY: Thank you.

Any other questions? Thank you.

JENNIFER HERZ: Thank you for your time.

REP. MCCRORY: Gerry Pastor from Connecticut Childcare Association.

GERRY PASTOR: Representative Fleischmann, McCrory, Ackert and the other members of the committee, thank you very much.

My name is Gerry Pastor. I'm executive director of the Connecticut Childcare Association. We started a little less than two years ago, and currently count about 155 members representing 300 licensed childcare programs in the State of Connecticut.

I'll start by saying we are in support of both S.B. 25 and S.B. 26. My reason for being here is to communicate the fact that the Connecticut Childcare Association has an interest in participating in all aspects and all things that affect children in early childhood programs in Connecticut.

We bring to the table not just the thousands of years of years of experience of our members, but the fact that we communicate regularly with 600 other licensed programs in Connecticut.

And finally and last but not least, that we are well on our way of creating a national information sharing network, which I actually am very excited about. we already have 20 state associations participating, and I fully

expect to get that over 40.

This is going to be a huge resource, not just for our members, but for all legislators and regulators who might like input as to what other states are doing with similar issues that we're all facing.

The other reason on here is to ask that you consider having our association become a member of the early childhood cabinet. We feel that we bring a perspective to that because of the diversity of our membership. We represent -- we have as many nonprofit as we do profits. We have faith-based, we have Montessori, we've got at least one of just about everything.

And we feel that we can bring this perspective to the cabinet and hope that you can -- we've provided language that any vehicle that you find it appropriate to utilize this language to add us, we would appreciate it.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you very much for your testimony.

I'm just curious. I think the Connecticut Childcare Association is relatively new. Do you know when it is that you were first formed?

GERRY PASTOR: I'm going to say probably around June or July 2012.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: And is there some sort of an organizational void that CCCA felt it was filling on behalf of providers, and if so, what are the kinds of things that you seek to do for your members?

GERRY PASTOR: Yes. There's a total void, and there has been for many years until we arrived in terms of representing the interest of licensed

childcare as a group.

In a nutshell, our organization focuses on the business of childcare. And when I say business once again I want to emphasize that we're as many nonprofits as we are profits. But we all deal with the same business issues that define our abilities to improve the qualities of our programs.

We serve our members in many ways, not just as a legislative or regulatory proponent.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: And you're called the Childcare Association. Do you know, among your members, what percentage are involved with education programs, and what percentage are providing childcare but without an educational component?

GERRY PASTOR: Wow. I'm going to guess 95 percent to 100 percent incorporate an educational component. I know maybe -- certainly almost all of us have preschools. I know almost all of us incorporate educational components in our programs with infants and toddlers as well.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: So does that mean that you'd be able to get to us what percentage of your members are NAEYC-accredited or have other educational credentials?

GERRY PASTOR: Yes.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: That would be very helpful to us as we try and sort of figure out where you fit into the equation. So appreciate that help.

Other questions from members of the committee?

I appear to have asked the questions that others were thinking. So thank you very much for your testimony, and advocacy and your

000181

178

lk/gdm/gbr EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014

11:30 A.M.

patience.

GERRY PASTOR: Okay. Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Now, Mr. Pastor was the last person on our sign-up list, but as is the tradition of the general assembly, I now ask whether there's anyone present here who was hoping to testify, didn't sign up, and would like to now.

I see some nodding heads. If so please come -- oh, shaking heads? Nodding heads, right. If no one is coming forward to the mic with the red light on, then I will officially declare this public hearing adjourned. Thank you.



ALL OUR KIN INC.

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

February 28, 2014

Dear Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and Esteemed Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Rachel Wilf, and I am a Policy Fellow at All Our Kin, a nationally-recognized, Connecticut-based nonprofit. All Our Kin trains, supports, and sustains family child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. We work directly with over 250 parents and educators, serving over 1,200 children, in greater New Haven, greater Bridgeport, and Norwalk. I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 25, "An Act Establishing an Office of Early Childhood."

We believe that the Office of Early Childhood is the most effective mechanism for creating a system that ensures quality in all child care settings and provides information and access for all of Connecticut's families. Prior to last year's Executive Order creating the Office of Early Childhood, families and providers alike were forced to navigate a fragmented and confusing network of programs and services for young children. Although the Office of Early Childhood has begun the systems-level changes required to streamline and bring transparency to our state's early childhood systems, much work remains.

At All Our Kin, we see firsthand the difficulties families face as they search for affordable, accessible, quality child care options. Parents report that the state's early childhood system is confusing and overwhelming; they tell us that they do not know where to go to get the information that they need, and that they become discouraged and exhausted in their attempts to navigate the current, fragmented system.

We also see the need for a unified system for providers, specifically family child care providers. Too often, family child care providers are forgotten or left out of professional development opportunities and funding streams that can raise the quality of their work. Yet family child care providers play a crucial role in our state as caregivers of Connecticut's youngest and most vulnerable children. Our state faces an acute shortage of quality child care for infants and toddlers—and this shortage especially affects low-income families. In these conditions of scarcity, family child care providers, both licensed and unlicensed, play a crucial role as the teachers of our youngest and most vulnerable children. Family child care programs are essential to meeting the need for infant and toddler care, as well as the need for affordable, second- and third- shift, and culturally diverse care.

When providers are unable to give children high-quality early learning experiences—because of lack of education and training, insufficient resources, isolation, and high stress levels—children begin at a disadvantage, and their development is delayed. In the words of Harvard's Center for the Developing Child, "Early experiences determine whether a child's brain architecture will provide a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health."

At All Our Kin, we have demonstrated that with sufficient investment, incentives, and support, family child care programs can meet high levels of quality. However, for providers to meet the levels of quality that all Connecticut's children deserve, we must create an early childhood system in which these essential caregivers are included as full participants, a system that recognizes and rewards them for excellence, offers incentives for professional development, and holds them to high quality standards.

We believe that the Office of Early Childhood is ideally situated to lead our state toward creating such a system. In the past six months, the Office has already begun to shape statewide conversations on how best to improve outcomes for children. In the future, we expect that the Office will take the lead on issues including licensing and professional development for providers, family engagement, the creation of early screening and referral systems, and coordination of data collection. These steps are essential if we are to create a comprehensive, coordinated system of programs and services that will provide for all of Connecticut's children.

We applaud the state of Connecticut for recognizing the need to coordinate our state's early childhood programs and services. We believe that the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood is crucial to the well-being of children, families, and child care providers across Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachel Wilf
Policy Fellow
All Our Kin, Inc.

TESTIMONY TO EDUCATION COMMITTEE CONCERNING SENATE BILL 25

SUBMITTED BY FREDRICK W. JACKSON – MARCH 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Committee

My name is Fredrick Jackson and I come before your Committee wearing several hats today:

I represent the Social Justice Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut on the Steering Committee of the Early Childhood Alliance, and am a Board member of St. John's Child Care Center – as well as serving as a member of Bridgeport's School Readiness Council.

My objective is to convey strong support for SB 25 from all these organizations – which codifies a bold, innovative, and major step forward for Connecticut's children.

By now, the importance of early childhood is much more widely accepted than it was eight years ago when I unexpectedly found myself as the only businessman locked up with 60 experts in early childhood charged with drafting Bridgeport's Blueprint for Young Children! As the former Co-Chair of the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children, I now know full well that the first five years of life set the stage for success – or failure –throughout the rest of a child's life. We also know that dollars spent in effective early care programs have a significant payback for society in increased academic success, lower involvement in criminal activity, less unemployment, etc.

Codifying the Office of Early Childhood created by Executive Order last year will assure that the OEC will be able to tackle their most significant challenge. That is, the coordination of the State's childcare programs once spread out over five large Agencies.

For example, a program of major importance to families like Care 4 Kids is only a minor portion of the DSS mandate - while it becomes a major focus of the OEC, allowing coordination with programs such as School Readiness. I would note that Care 4 Kids is the major funder of our Center's Infant and Toddler program – which primarily serves low income working parents – so improving its efficiency and effectiveness is a key concern for us.

One element of SB25 I would bring to your attention is the “Grandfathering” of current teachers – necessary not only to protect the good people now working with our kids, but also helping us to serve the increasing number of children that will be added to programs such as School Readiness over the next several years.

Beyond the passage of SB25, I would urge you to keep in mind the need to examine the work being done by the local Early Childhood Collaboratives active in many of our towns and cities. At some - hopefully not too distant – time, such an examination should include how to best to expand/support their efforts and how their voices might be better heard in places such as Office of Early Childhood.



Education Committee Public Hearing
March 3, 2014

Testimony Submitted by Richard Porth, United Way of Connecticut

My name is Richard Porth and I serve as CEO of United Way of Connecticut. This testimony is provided in enthusiastic support for Governor's Bill No. 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood. This testimony is provided on behalf of Connecticut's sixteen United Ways, serving cities and towns across the state of Connecticut.

Connecticut's fifteen local United Ways have a long history of providing support for local early childhood programs. In FY 13, local United Ways invested more than \$4.2 million in funding for early childhood, supporting a range of initiatives and activities from additional early care slots to early care quality improvement initiatives and more. United Way of Connecticut serves as the state organization for the fifteen local United Ways. United Way of Connecticut also partners with the state to help provide multiple integrated and synergistic early childhood services, including 2-1-1 Child Care (Connecticut's child care resource and referral agency), Child Development Infoline (a main access point for parents seeking help from Help Me Grow and Birth to Three) and Care 4 Kids (child care subsidy program).

United Ways have long recognized the importance of quality early care and education. Our own experience as early childhood funders and service providers convinces us of the value of good collaboration locally and statewide in the delivery of these crucial services.

We applaud the Governor, the legislature's champions of early care and education and the leadership of the Office of Early Childhood for the progress already achieved –making more early care and education slots available, in particular for at-risk children, promoting quality enhancements in early care and education, and encouraging good collaboration at the state and local level among the various components of the early childhood system in Connecticut.

And we respectfully request that the legislature formally authorize the establishment of the new Office of Early Childhood as soon as possible.

Connecticut's United Ways pledge to support the new Office of Early Childhood and its efforts to better coordinate the work done by the many different entities engaged in the early childhood system. And we support the new Office of Early Childhood and its strong leadership as it maps out strategies to achieve consistent quality in early care and education at the state level and in our communities. Ultimately, the Office of Early Childhood's success in this endeavor will reap substantial benefit for thousands of children and their families across Connecticut.

Thank you.



EDUCATION CONNECTION

A Regional Educational Service Center

355 Goshen Road
PO Box 909
Litchfield, CT 06759-0909
Phone: 860.567.0863
Fax: 860.567.3381

345 Main Street
Danbury, CT 06810
Phone: 203.791.1904
Fax: 203.778.8076

www.educationconnection.org

February 27, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleishmann, and Members of the Education Committee:

I am Juleen P. Flanigan, the Director of Early Childhood Services at EDUCATION CONNECTION, the regional education service center serving western CT. I am writing this testimony in support of Senate Bill #25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood. I strongly support the establishment of the CT Office of Early Childhood that will ensure the continuity and coordination of established services that meet the needs of young children and their families.

CT's support systems for young children and families has evolved over decades one by one as different needs emerged or funding became available through federal or state resources. This development over time has resulted in a service system that spans 7 state agencies with very little formal inter-relatedness resulting in a fragmented and often ineffective and inefficient system. Those of us working with families and young children are acutely aware of this issue as we attempt to support parents' ability to navigate these systems. It is time for us to correct this system and support a coordinated approach.

Some may question – why now? We as a state and a nation have witnessed over the past few decades the release of compelling research that testifies to the fact that 80% of a child's brain is developed by the age of 5. This development is supported by multiple factors including nurturing, attachment, nutrition, and safety. We have also learned that the brain is enriched through exposure to language and words, music, books, art and tactile experiences. This research has stunned some and validated for others the importance of the earliest years of a child's life and the important role of the parents, teachers and the caregivers of young children. We are revising our curricula, providing expanded support and training to new parents, implementing new methods of support to teachers and investing in the community collaborative model that highlights the voices of parents.

Likewise, it is time to revisit the design of our state systems to refocus priorities, universalize principles that apply to all services and understand that families approach the service system as individuals trying to find the most appropriate supports for their situation. Providers experience difficulty with this task themselves.

We have already seen great strides over this past year with the Office of Early Childhood- state employees from multiple state agencies are talking together and problem solving to align systems to be more effective. We need to continue this – it makes so much sense.

One of the other challenges that we are faced with is the exciting growth in early childhood services and the need for qualified teachers. In order to ensure quality, teachers are being held to new standards. This is important and needed, but not at the expense of losing excellent teachers who may be required to return to school for an additional degree or certification. There is a "grandfather" provision in Senate Bill 25 which is essential to provide for an enduring workforce.

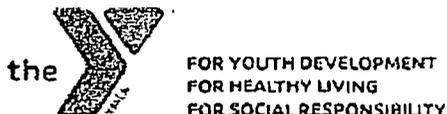
All teachers in NAEYC accredited programs are required to have ongoing professional development and will continue to do so. Please support this grandfather language as the colleges prepare future teachers and the currently qualified teachers continue with their good work and continuous improvement process.

Thank you.

Juleen P. Flanigan

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Juleen P. Flanigan".

Director, Early Childhood Services



John L. Cattelan
Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs
S.B. 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood and
S.B. 26, An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood
Education
Education Committee
March 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is John Cattelan and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The Alliance represents 23 YMCAs across the state of Connecticut.

I'm here today to offer the Alliance's support for S.B. 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood and S.B. 26 An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs is a strong supporter of any effort that will increase affordability and the quality of child care education. We believe these proposals are a very positive step.

Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs
241 Trumbull Street, Hartford, CT 06103
P 860 216 1474 F 860 522 1314

Connecticut's YMCAs, without an office of Early Childhood, receive funding from three state agencies. Coordinating of funding and delivery of services from one state agency is a proposal we strongly support. In addition, we are encouraged by the proposal's investment of funds to improve the early childhood licensing system and finance a structure to measure quality.

Finally, we are encouraged by the proposal's expansion of the number of school readiness slots and increasing the reimbursement rates for this program. We are also supportive of the increased investment in the Care 4 Kids program and the ultimate goal of universal pre-school for all of Connecticut's children.

I don't believe it is necessary for me to inform the members of the committee about the evidence that supports early childhood education. YMCAs across Connecticut exist to strengthen our communities and every day work with thousands of children, women and men to ensure everyone regardless of age, income or background - has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.

CCER
Connecticut Council
for
EDUCATION REFORM

Testimony by Jeffrey Villar, Ph.D. to the Education Committee

March 3, 2014

Good morning, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. As the Executive Director of the Connecticut Council for Education Reform, I strongly endorse Governor Malloy's universal preschool initiative. On today's agenda, there are two bills that will implement portions of this vital initiative. I will direct the majority of my comments to:

1. S.B. 25, "An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood" and
2. S.B. 26, "An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education."

CCER supports the intent of S.B. 25, "An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood" which will create a coordinated system of high-quality early childhood education in the state. Three requirements within the bill will help move this forward by:

1. Registering all day care center staff and students in the early childhood data system, which will align staff and students with k-12 data systems;
2. Setting a statutory September 1, 2014, start date for an early childhood longitudinal data system which will help the state measure the quality of early childhood programs; and
3. Establishing an Office of Early Childhood Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

Currently, only preschool children and their teachers in publicly subsidized programs, such as School Readiness, are required to be entered into the early childhood data system. Mandating that all day care centers must register in the early childhood data system will improve the quality

and utility of the early childhood longitudinal data system by including all pre-school children and teachers in the system. In time, the longitudinal data system will be able to link preschool programs with children's progress in the k-12 system. This will allow the State and the public to better understand which pre-school programs are doing the best job of preparing our children and allow support to be directed to those programs in need of improvement.

The QRIS is another important component of a quality early childhood system. The QRIS will provide resources and opportunities for early childhood providers to improve the quality of their programs. Starting with license-exempt programs, like the Families, Friends, and Neighbors day care programs, QRIS will provide incentives (license reimbursements, a \$500 bonus) for programs to become licensed in the first tier of quality.

In the licensing tier, QRIS funding will be used to increase the frequency of required day care program inspections to ensure these programs are in healthy and safe environments.

To improve beyond licensing, early childhood programs will have access to other incentives. For instance, the QRIS will fund regional centers which will provide professional development and technical assistance to early childhood programs in key areas such as child behavioral health and early learning and development standards. Scholarship funding will also be available for early childhood workers who want to earn higher education credentials.

With the forward movement of existing programs through the tiers and onto accreditation, the quality of Connecticut's early childhood system will improve, potentially dramatically. Perhaps, more critically, with these changes, more accredited slots could be created. While FY 2015's investment of 1,020 new slots is a great first start, CCER estimates that 5,500 more high quality slots will be needed over the next four years. To meet these goals, more high quality preschool slots must be created. Providing incentives for existing programs to become accredited will be a powerful tool in generating the additional high-quality preschool slots needed to accommodate low-income children.

The universal preschool initiative has long-term positive implications for Connecticut's future. Low-income children who attend high quality preschools do better not just in school, but in life. Research shows that low-income preschool graduates are more likely to retain jobs, earn more money, and raise their children in supportive family settings than their peers who did not attend preschool.

CCER also encourages the passage of S.B. 26, "An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education" which expands the School Readiness program to include all of the Alliance Districts. The bill also increases the rates for both programs to encourage more full-day, high-quality programs for low-income children.

Of some concern to CCER is this: the bill narrowly defines universal preschool for low-income children to include only those low-income children who live in low-income communities. There are many low-income children who live outside of these communities who also need access to high-quality preschool experiences. CCER's estimates that about 6,500 children statewide do not have access to a high-quality preschool program. While the addition of 1,000 new slots is a terrific first step towards fulfilling unmet need, there still are about 5,500 low-income preschool children who need a high-quality preschool slot.

To address this, the bill also calls for the Office of Early Childhood to do a study about the unmet need of preschool slots for low-income children. CCER would suggest that it would be appropriate to consider adding all communities—rather than just low-income communities—in the study. In her recent testimony to the Appropriations Committee, Dr. Jones-Taylor, the Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood, seemed positively inclined to such an approach.

Thank you for the opportunity to present before you today. Please let us know if we can provide you with any further information.

TESTIMONY OF THE
CONNECTICUT COALITION
FOR **JUSTICE**
IN EDUCATION FUNDING
TO THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and esteemed members of the Education Committee: The Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding appreciates this opportunity to submit comments pertinent to Governor's Bills No. 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, and No. 26, An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education.

Governor Malloy's continuing attention to early childhood education and its critical role in preparing children for success in school and in life is greatly appreciated, and we are pleased to speak today to the overall merits of directing improved policies and additional funding to improving the state's delivery of essential education services to young children.

A large and ever-growing body of research shows that high-quality preschool education has substantial positive effects on young children's learning and development, with lasting effects on cognitive abilities, school progress (e.g., grade repetition, special education placement, and high school graduation), and social behavior. Some research studies indicate that intensive, high-quality preschool programs alone could close half the achievement gap between minority and white children or low-income and other children through the end of high school.

However, the research evidence seems clear that if the long-term benefits of preschool are to be realized, the design and delivery of these programs must be of a sufficient quality to produce large initial impacts that place children on new, higher learning trajectories — and that the quality of teaching and learning in the public schools, especially in the early grades (K-3), must be simultaneously bolstered — if the investment in preschool programs is to overcome fade-out as children progress through school.

Thus, CCJEF cautions that however positive the provisions contained in Governors Bills 25 and 26 and the Governor's proposed FY15 related budget adjustments may be, they are still insufficient for achieving the oft-quoted 7:1 return on investment in preschool programming. Moreover, adding 1,000 new slots represents but slow progress toward the universal preschool goal that the state should be aiming for in meeting its constitutional obligation to ensure education adequacy and equity for all. Universal "access," wherein only the low-income children in Priority Districts, the 50 lowest-wealth communities, or districts that have a school

with greater than 40 percent poverty are afforded state subsidies, belies the fact that there are needy children who live in every community of the state and that, as with K-12 schooling, the best education takes place in racially and economically diverse settings.

Ensuring preschool program quality, attracting talented college-educated staff, providing sustained professional development, and remunerating fully credentialed teachers at a level comparable to that of the public schools doesn't come cheaply. Cost-effectiveness of the state's investment in preschool relies heavily on the level, predictability, and sustainability of state funding to help make quality programs feasible for providers and affordable for all families — and it means concomitant added investment in improving K-3 teaching and learning, as well as substantial investment in improvements all the way up the grades.

Do these bills and the proposed FY15 budget adjustments provide ample funding for the new Office of Early Childhood and to support and expand quality preschool programs? About the former we cannot say, but for high-quality preschool programs of 6 hours per day and 180 days per year, the costs estimated by research elsewhere yields estimates similar to per pupil spending on K-12 education, a funding approach that reportedly is used in a few states. Some even argue that preschool costs can be expected to exceed K-12 because providers and class sizes are smaller, health and screening services are more intense, the pool of qualified teachers is smaller, and specialized facilities are needed. For example, a 2007 cost function study predicted the cost of preschool for New Jersey's Abbott districts (arguably the most successful large-scale example of quality preschool programs, resulting from years of court-ordered remedies in adequacy/equity litigation undertaken on behalf of that state's poorest urban communities); in today's dollars the cost was found to be \$13,639, and for private centers the unit cost was \$15,897 (Clive Belfield and Heather Schwartz, "The Cost of High-Quality Pre-School Education in New Jersey," Education Law Center, December 2007).

CCJEF v. Rell

In March 2010, on plaintiffs' appeal of an unfavorable pretrial ruling regarding adequacy claims, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled in *CCJEF v. Rell* that the state constitution ensures the right of every Connecticut public school student to a quality (adequate) education, and the state must pay for it. The Court then remanded the case to Hartford Superior Court for trial on the merits of its adequacy and equity claims. That trial will commence on September 9, 2014, nine years after the case was initially filed.

Let us be clear: Neither the establishment of a single Office of Early Childhood and expanded opportunities for preschool education as described in these two bills, nor the education reforms that were enacted with great controversy and fanfare in 2012 and 2013, or any others that might yet be passed in 2014, are dispositive of the *CCJEF v. Rell* education funding lawsuit. While some of the mandated reforms may hold promise of future improvements in the quality of education afforded some (but not all) students, all the statutorily promised changes come too little, too late. All are subject to delay and distortion, as is already evident with the State's proposal to abandon its use of the newly revamped Education Cost Sharing formula, and none of the enacted or proposed reforms are adequately or equitably funded by the State.

Notwithstanding the vital importance of preschool in 21st century education, in September 2011 the State filed a motion in *CCJEF v. Rell* to exclude all facts or testimony that plaintiffs may offer relating to the education of preschool children. In the State's view, the Connecticut constitution does not extend education rights to children who are not of public elementary and secondary school age, even where those programs are integral components of public school districts. Plaintiffs vigorously oppose the State's position that preschool today is not an essential component of an adequate and equitable education — a position that is almost unfathomable given the proven educational benefits of preschool.

It seems fitting at this time to offer the Education Committee an excerpt from a not-yet-public report prepared for the CCJEF trial by Dr. W. Stephen Barnett of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University, an internationally recognized expert in early childhood education:

[A]dditional state investments in intensive, high-quality preschool education could make a significant contribution toward closing the extremely large educational achievement and attainment gaps for disadvantaged children in Connecticut. This will require significant reforms. Simply increasing enrollment in existing programs will not appreciably improve school readiness and subsequent academic success. Judging from the effects found for similar programs in the research literature, I conclude that Connecticut's state preschool program, as currently designed and funded, is too weak and provided to too few children to have a substantial and pervasive impact on school readiness and achievement....Other programs available to disadvantaged children are no substitute for a high-quality state-funded program....Many children who are not low-income could benefit from a strong state preschool program, as well.

Equality at the starting gate is imperative if we are to hold all children to increasingly high standards and expect them to graduate "career and college ready."

Equality at the starting gate is also imperative if we are committed to closing the state's unconscionable achievement gap, reducing special education placement and grade repetition, and lessening the profound impact of poverty on children's academic success.

Moreover, equality at the starting gate is imperative if this state wishes to realize a plethora of economic and social gains over the lifetime of these preschoolers — gains that economists repeatedly point out accrue not just to high school graduates personally but also to local, state, and federal governments in the form of increased tax revenues and decreased expenditures for health, crime, welfare, and other social costs.

Inasmuch as the 2010 Supreme Court decision in the adequacy appeal explicitly states that the standard for what constitutes an adequate or suitable education is dynamic and dependent on the demands of an evolving world, we remain confident that preschoolers' education rights will be duly affirmed as protected under the Connecticut constitution.

Respectfully submitted,

Herbert C. Rosenthal
CCJEF President
(203) 426-0660 h
hcrosenthal@aol.com

Dianne Kaplan deVries, Ed.D.
CCJEF Project Director
(603) 325-5250 m
dianne@ccjef.org

Jim Finley
Finley Government Strategies
Pro-Bono Consultant to CCJEF for Government Services
(203) 804-6895 m
jimfinley1955@att.net

The Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) is a broad-based coalition of municipalities, local boards of education, statewide professional education associations, unions, and other pro-education advocacy organizations, parents and schoolchildren aged 18 or older, and other concerned Connecticut taxpayers. Member communities are home to nearly half the state's public school students, including some three-fourths of all minority students, those from low-income families, and students from homes where English is not the primary language.

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FUTURE FOR EVERYONE

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TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
MARCH 3, 2014

My name is Jennifer Herz and I am Assistant Counsel for the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA represents approximately 10,000 businesses throughout Connecticut and the vast majority of these are small companies employing less than 50 people.

A top priority for CBIA is preparing students for the 21st century economy. Therefore, CBIA urges your support of SB 25 An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood and SB 26 An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education.

Increasing access to quality early childhood education is key to ensuring Connecticut develops a steady supply of talent for the 21st century. Quality preschool programs mean students enter kindergarten ready to learn. To that end, establishing the Office of Early Childhood will provide a strong base of support to coordinate early childhood education. Establishing the proper infrastructure for these programs is crucial for success. The Office of Early Childhood will have the necessary expertise and resources to support the programs.

Additionally, quality must be the central factor for such early childhood programs and furthermore, parents must be able to assess these programs in order to make informed choices for their children.

CBIA recognizes that Connecticut's skilled workforce is one of our best competitive advantages and initiatives like this – expanding access to quality preschool programs – will support Connecticut's strong performance in this important area.

Quality preschool programming with a strong supporting infrastructure will give Connecticut's students the tools they need to enter the 21st century and keep Connecticut's workforce competitive in a global economy.

CBIA urges your support of SB 25 and SB 26. Thank you for the opportunity to offer CBIA's comments.



Connecticut Association for Human Services
 110 Bartholomew Avenue - Suite 4030
 Hartford, Connecticut 06106
 www.caHS.org

Casey McGuane, President
 James P. Horan, Executive Director
 860.951.2212
 860.951.6511 fax

Testimony in support of SB 25 and SB 26

March 3, 2014

Good Afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and Members of the Education Committee, my name is Elizabeth Fraser, I am a Policy Analyst with the Connecticut Association for Human Services. CAHS works to reduce poverty and promote economic success through both policy and program work. I am testifying today in support of SB 25: An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood and SB 26: An Act Expanding the Opportunities for Early Childhood Education.

SB 25: An Act Establishing an Office of Early Childhood

One of the most promising achievements from the 2013 Legislative Session was the work done toward creating the Office of Early Childhood. This initiative unifies a cadre of disconnected programs, across agencies, into a single, focused and accountable system. It is encouraging that the process of merging both programs and funding streams into the Office of Early Childhood is well underway. However, the accomplishments to date and future initiatives will not be secure until the Office is codified by statute.

CAHS fully supports SB 25. We believe that the system being developed provides a deliberate strategy that will be of benefit to programs, families and most importantly, to children. The future unified data collection and reporting system will provide direction and accountability toward results. CAHS would also like to express support for the inclusion of the grandfathering language within SB 25 that addresses teacher credentialing. This language allows for many proven educators, who have been of positive influence in the lives of children, to continue doing their important work. Without the inclusion of grandfathering language, a significant number of dedicated educators would not be able to continue in their role. This loss would be to the detriment of both programs and children.

With the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood, early childhood issues, protocol and best practice have been lifted into Connecticut's educational conversation. Now is the time to expeditiously vote the Office of Early Childhood into Connecticut statute, so that the positive changes that are in process are permanently established as part of Connecticut's educational system.

SB 26: An Act Expanding the Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

CAHS supports the concept that all children should be afforded the right to high quality early learning

experiences. With this in mind, we strongly support Governor Malloy's vision of universal access to pre-school. SB 26, which allows for the creation of 1,020 new School Readiness slots, is a positive step in this direction. In addition, the specification to extend the reach of these slots into Alliance and

Competitive districts targets many children who, to this point, have not had access to affordable programs of high quality.

As Bill 26 is being more fully developed, we urge that Readiness Councils and providers, who are familiar with the nuances of adding capacity, be tapped to inform the legislative process. Allowing for *flexibility* in the distribution of slots, based on the expertise of Councils and providers, will ensure that these new opportunities are distributed with an efficient and intentional approach. With this guidance we can be assured that the technicalities of building capacity do not interfere with progress. We know this can be accomplished and are excited that many more children would have access to early education experiences and reap the benefit of a strong early start.

CAHS is excited that Connecticut is poised to take ambitious steps towards equalizing the societal structure of early care and education. Research clearly links the gains made in early childhood to children's future success. As our knowledge about the benefits of early education are being influenced by research, so should our actions and policies.

Thank you for your consideration.

CONNECTICUT
VOICES
FOR CHILDREN

Independent research and advocacy to improve the lives of Connecticut's children

Testimony Supporting
S.B. 25: An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood and
S.B. 26 An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

Edie Joseph and Cyd Oppenheimer, J.D.

Education Committee

March 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

We are testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, an independent, research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

Connecticut Voices for Children strongly supports S.B. 25: An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, as well as S.B. 26: An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education.

The Office of Early Childhood lays the foundation for an early care and education system that is capable of meeting the needs of all young children and families effectively, efficiently, and empathetically. We have long advocated for the creation of a separate department to better consolidate and coordinate early childhood services. Currently, the Office of Early Childhood exists only under Executive Order.¹ The Office must be codified in legislation to ensure longevity and maximum effectiveness.

National research shows that fragmented early care and education (ECE) delivery systems "limit effectiveness in delivering a seamless continuum of services to children and families, who may frequently utilize services across these siloed systems, experiencing cumbersome and duplicative processes, varied eligibility and enrollment requirements, and undue inconvenience."² The Office of Early Childhood draws on the strengths of a separate department – independence, autonomy, and consolidation of many programs under one roof – while benefiting from significant cost savings through administrative support from the State Department of Education.

We also believe that the Office of Early Childhood successfully addresses the 5 key elements of successful early care and education systems as identified by the BUILD Initiative, a national research-based think tank and consulting organization that helps to develop state- and federal-level early care and education systems. The new system outlined in S.B. 25 recognizes that:

1. A comprehensive early childhood system includes early learning, health, mental health, nutrition, family support, and early intervention;³
2. Early childhood governance structures that control federal and state funds and how they are spent are more successful than those structures that do not have this control;⁴
3. Data are crucial to the effectiveness, transparency, and successful outcomes of an early childhood system.⁵
4. Public-private partnership and local-level system building efforts are beneficial to system stability.⁶
5. Legislation to develop a comprehensive, coordinated governance system is the best way to form such a system.⁷

The Office of Early Childhood unites key programs affecting children birth to five, bringing together under one roof not only the major early care and education programs (including Care4Kids, School Readiness, Head Start, and State-Funded Centers), but also quality improvement services, licensing home visitation and family support programs, special education early intervention services, and workforce development initiatives.⁸ This broad consolidation reflects a critical understanding of the need to consider not only educational needs of young children, but also health, developmental, and family supports. By drawing on existing staff from these departments, the Office will benefit from tremendous expertise, while also having the ability to better coordinate between programs, improve efficiency, and reduce redundancy and confusion.

S.B. 25 is the culmination of tremendous work on the part of many stakeholders and partners. Governor Malloy's support for early childhood was invaluable, including creation of the Office of Early Childhood by Executive Order in June 2013.⁹ Getting to that stage would not have been possible without the support of this legislature, which passed PA 11-181, creating the planning process to develop an early childhood system blueprint. In addition, the Early Childhood Planning Team, led by Myra Jones-Taylor, put in many months of hard work collecting information, listening to stakeholders across the state, identifying the best practices of systems from other states, and crafting a thoughtful framework for Connecticut.

We believe that unifying early childhood services in one location will help create greater coordination and efficiency, reducing confusion for parents and providers and improving outcomes for children. The Office of Early Childhood will provide a strong platform from which the state of Connecticut will address the following **eight fundamental elements of successful early childhood systems**, which have been identified through extensive research and input from Connecticut's ECE community:¹⁰

1. **Uniform reporting requirements** for providers;
2. **Blended and braided state and federal funding sources** to allow early care and education providers to access a single funding stream;
3. **Fully funded services for children aged 0-8** based on evidence and research as to the real cost of high quality care;
4. **A quality rating and improvement system;**
5. **Means to develop our early childhood workforce and improve this workforce's compensation;**
6. **Coordinated data collection** that ensures that data are complete and transparent;
7. **Uniform standards for early learning** that are developmentally appropriate; and
8. **Improved outreach to and access for parents.**

In addition, we support **S.B. 26, An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education**, which takes key steps to implement the Governor's budget recommendations. The Governor's budget both increases the number of prekindergarten slots available for Connecticut's most vulnerable 3 and 4 year olds, and raises rates for early care and education subsidies.

In particular, we support language in **S.B. 26** which would allow for a rate increase in early care and education subsidies. An increase in rates is crucial for maintaining and developing high-quality early education settings, and for providing more competitive wages to ensure the attraction and retention of high-quality early childhood educators. Though we applaud the Governor's proposed increase of 3%, this increase alone is insufficient to allow us to reach our goal of paying

early childhood educators a competitive wage that will help Connecticut's early childhood educators develop, foster, and maintain the high-quality education our state needs. We believe the legislature should amend this language to legislatively establish a rate that would allow for the competitive wages required for quality.¹¹

S.B. 26 makes additional commitments to quality by enacting the Governor's budget proposal to increase the frequency of child care licensing inspections. It also transfers authority of such inspection and investigation to the executive director of the Office of Early Childhood. Increasing frequency of inspections ensures consistent quality, and concentrating this authority in the new Office makes clear sense.

Finally, **S.B. 26 requires that the executive director of the OEC develop a plan to provide school readiness spaces to all eligible children.**¹² This plan is a critical element in creating a coordinated and more accessible early childhood system, and we applaud the legislation for acknowledging the Office's capacity and vision.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

¹ See Executive Order No. 35, State of Connecticut, (June 24, 2013), available at: http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/lib/malloy/EO_35_Early_Childhood.pdf.

² See Julia Coffman, Kathy Glazer, Susan Hibbard, and Kristin Wiggins, "Early Childhood System Governance: Lessons from State Experiences," *BUILD* (November 2010) on pg. 11.

³ See Julia Coffman, Kathy Glazer, Susan Hibbard, and Kristin Wiggins, "Early Childhood System Governance: Lessons from State Experiences," *The BUILD Initiative* (November 2010) on pg. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-15

⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸ Care4Kids, Child Care Center Licensing, Home Visitation Programs, and Special Education Prekindergarten Services have not yet moved to the Office of Early Childhood but are slated to move effective July 1, 2014.

⁹ See Executive Order No. 35, State of Connecticut, (June 24, 2013), available at: http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/lib/malloy/EO_35_Early_Childhood.pdf.

¹⁰ These eight fundamental elements were determined through collaborative research and discussion between Connecticut Voices for Children, the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Connecticut Parent Power, and the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). For more information, see Annemarie Hillman and Cyd Oppenheimer, "Connecticut Early Care and Education Progress Report, 2010," *Connecticut Voices for Children* (February 2011) on pg. 28-30 (available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/connecticut-early-care-and-education-progress-report-2010>).

¹¹ To raise prekindergarten teacher salaries to \$42,500 (the average starting salary for elementary school teachers in Connecticut), the per child rate would need to be increased by \$1,850, creating a new full day slot rate of \$10,206. More information is available on request.

¹² See Governor's Bill No. 26, Connecticut General Assembly, available at: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2014/TOB/S/2014SB-00026-R00-SB.htm>.



Testimony for

SB 25, "An Act Establishing an Office of Early Childhood"
SB 26, "An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education"

March 3, 2014

Sen. Stillman, Rep. Fleischman, Sen. Bye, Rep. McCrory, Sen. Boucher, Rep. Ackert and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Gerry Pastor and I am the Executive Director of the CT Child Care Association which proudly contains a diverse membership of 155 members representing almost 300 licensed programs in CT. In total we provide services to almost 25,000 children and their families.

It's our association's privilege to first acknowledge the Office of Early Childhood for their efforts in offering the most comprehensive reform for early stage education in the history of Connecticut. OEC has made advancing progress for these children their top priority and we are grateful to see these proposals and funding a reality in this year's budget.

Recommendations for 2014

As a new organization with a very large and diverse membership, CCCA is committed to becoming more of a resource for the state's Early Childhood Education Cabinet. We urge the Education Committee to please consider having our association become members of this cabinet by adding the following language to any vehicle it may find appropriate:

Sec. 10-16z. Early Childhood Education Cabinet. Members. Duties. Annual plan of action. Annual report. (a) There is established the Early Childhood Education Cabinet. The cabinet shall consist of: (1) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, (2) one representative from the Department of Education who is responsible for programs required under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1400 et seq., as amended from time to time, appointed by the Commissioner of Education, (3) the Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee, (4) a representative from an institution of higher education in this state appointed by the president of the Board of Regents for Higher Education, (5) the Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee, (6) the Commissioner of Developmental

Services, or the commissioner's designee, (7) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee, (8) the executive director of the Commission on Children, or the executive director's designee, (9) the project director of the Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office, **(10) a representative of the Connecticut Child Care Association**, (11) a parent or guardian of a child who attends or attended a school readiness program appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, (12) a representative of a local provider of early childhood education appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, (13) a representative of the Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, (14) a representative of a state funded child care center appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, (15) two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of the House of Representatives and one of whom is a parent who has a child attending a school in a priority school district, (16) two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a member of the Senate and one of whom is a representative of a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program, (17) two appointed by the Governor, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Head Start Association and one of whom is a representative of the business or philanthropic community in this state, and (18) the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's designee. The chairperson of the council shall be appointed from among its members by the Governor.

(b) Within available appropriations and such private funding as may be available, the Early Childhood Education Cabinet shall (1) coordinate among state agencies, as well as public and private partnerships, the development of services that enhance the health, safety and learning of children from birth to nine years of age, inclusive, (2) not later than December 1, 2009, and annually thereafter, develop an annual plan of action that assigns the appropriate state agency to complete the tasks specified in the federal Head Start Act of 2007, P.L. 110-134, as amended from time to time, and (3) not later than March 1, 2010, and annually thereafter, submit an annual state-wide strategic report, pursuant to said federal Head Start Act, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, addressing the progress such agencies have made toward the completion of such tasks outlined under said federal Head Start Act and this subsection to the Governor and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and human services.

(c) The Early Childhood Education Cabinet shall be within the Department of Education for administrative purposes only.

CCCA is making this request in order to be a resource for all matters related to Early Education and Early Education Programs. Our membership represents a large amount of experience in the field and can provide our input through our regular communication with an additional 600 other licensed programs via our newsletters and other communications.

CCCA is actively creating a National Information Sharing Network which already has over 20 child care state associations participating and expect to extend this to most of the 50 states by the end of the month. The purpose of the network is to share information regarding legislative and regulatory practices and procedures. CCCA expects to not only make this network available to ourselves, but have it be a valuable resource for all legislators and regulators of our industry.

Thank you again for considering these ideas and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss them further.

Respectfully,

Gerry Pastor
gpastor@ctcca.org
860-989-9302



Testimony: Jennifer Alexander, Chief Executive Officer for ConnCAN
Education Committee – Monday, March 3, 2014

Good evening Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on two bills this evening regarding establishing the Office of Early Childhood (SB25) and expanding early childhood education (SB26).

My name is Jennifer Alexander and I am the Chief Executive Officer for the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN), which is a statewide advocacy organization focused on ensuring all kids get the high-quality education they deserve.

I strongly believe that all kids in Connecticut deserve the opportunity to attend a high-quality school, no matter where he or she lives, and that we must start providing our kids with a great education early.

But unfortunately, that's not happening in Connecticut today.

Today, more than 4,000 three- and four-year-olds in Connecticut do not have access to preschool.¹ As a result, our kids are not getting the start they need to succeed. Right now, only one out of three African-American, Hispanic, or low-income 3rd graders in Connecticut are reading at grade level.² And the research is clear that if a student is not reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade, they are four times more likely not to graduate high school on time.³

That's unacceptable. We can—and must—improve education for our children and our state have a brighter economic future. And doing so starts with improving access to quality early childhood education. Two measures before you today – codifying the Office of Early Childhood and enacting policies that help expand pre-K programs – will help do just that: improve outcomes for kids early so they're prepared for future success.

Research shows that on average, children who have access to preschool programs gain about one-third of a year of additional learning across language, reading, and math skills.⁴ In some cases, preschool programs have enhanced reading skills of kids between a half and a full year of additional learning in reading and math,⁵ serving as proof that we can get more of our kids reading at the appropriate grade level if we start early.

¹ Office of Early Childhood "Connecticut's Proposal for Universal Access to Pre-Kindergarten " 2014 Hyperlink
<http://www.ct.gov/oec/cwp/view.asp?Q=540158&A=4547>

² Connecticut State Department of Education "Connecticut Mastery Tests " 2013 Hyperlink
<http://solutions1.emetric.net/CMTPublic/Index.aspx>

³ Annie E. Casey Foundation "Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation " By Donald J. Hernandez. Hyperlink:
<http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/DoubleJeopardyHowThirdGradeReadingSkillsandPoverty/DoubleJeopardyReport030812forweb.pdf>

⁴ Society for Research In Child Development "Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education " Hyperlink
http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children.pdf

⁵ Society for Research in Child Development "Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education " Hyperlink
http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children.pdf

We have a choice: we can pay for a high-quality preschool, or we can pay a much higher price later. For example, the rate of incarceration from felony convictions is one-third less among low-income children who have received access to a preschool experience.⁶ Research shows that for every dollar spent on preschool programs, the state can save anywhere from \$3.00 to \$7.00.⁷ Expanding preschool education is a smart economic investment for our kids and for our state.

As we expand preschool options, we need the Office of Early Childhood to consolidate efforts that have been scattered across agencies to better serve kids. The new office must ensure a strong governmental infrastructure to effectively align state resources and supports, improve family outreach and information, and ensure quality of programs that will prepare more youngsters for kindergarten and beyond.

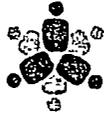
Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee – I urge you to support the expansion of early childhood programs and to codify the Office of Early Childhood. These efforts will help ensure that more kids across our state, particularly kids who need it most, receive the strong start they need to succeed later in life. They will also help make certain Connecticut remains a place where people want to live and work, companies want to invest and hire, and where our children thrive.

Thank you.

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⁶ Society for Research in Child Development "Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education" Hyperlink http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children.pdf

⁷ Society for Research in Child Development "Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education" Hyperlink http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children.pdf



Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance

Testimony of Merrill Gay
Executive Director, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Before the Education Committee
March 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and Members of the Committee,

I am Merrill Gay, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children, birth through age eight, in the areas of early learning, health, safety, and economic security. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, and Senate Bill 26, An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education.

SB 25 – An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood

The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance strongly supports Senate Bill 25 which would put into statute the Office of Early Childhood established by Executive Order last year. The vision for an Office of Early Childhood began with this Committee over three years ago with the bill that became PA 11-181, An Act Concerning Early Childhood Education and the Establishment of a Coordinated System of Early Care and Education and Child Development. We applaud the legislature for this vision, and urge you to finish the job by passing SB 25.

A designated Office of Early Childhood focuses early childhood efforts in one place, giving it the attention it deserves, and requires. A mounting body of research tells us that the early years of a child's life are critical to their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. It is essential that the state's early childhood programs are delivered with intentionality, coordinated to maximize effectiveness, and monitored to improve quality. Until last summer, services for young children were spread over at least five different state agencies and in none of those, was early childhood seen as key to the mission of the agency. With creation of the Office of Early Childhood last summer, we've begun to bring those various services together. As more of those services get moved to the Office over the next year including the Care4Kids subsidy, childcare licensing and the home visiting programs, Connecticut will be able to get all of the early childhood programs to work together and start to realize the collective impact that they could achieve when run as a coordinated system.

SB 25 will allow improvements to be made. The Office of Early Childhood is not just about moving programs from one place to another. SB 25 will put the Office into statute allowing it the authority not only to control the funding of early childhood programs but to make the changes necessary to improve coordination and synergy between programs and collect data allowing more informed funding and policy decisions.

Grandfathering of qualified staff. As you know the school readiness law requires that by 2015 half of the teachers in the state funded programs must have a BA and by 2020 every state funded classroom will have to have a teacher with a BA in Early Childhood or related field. A small,

but essential component of SB 25 grandfathers in existing teachers with a BA in a concentration other than Early Childhood so that they don't have to get another BA to keep the job they've been doing perfectly well up until now. This language is very important for teachers and programs, I urge your support of the grandfathering section and ask that you consider extending it to include other staff with BA's as well.

SB 26 –An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance also urges you to support SB 26. This bill does two key things:

It updates the law that created the School Readiness Program:

- by making it possible for more children in the Alliance and Competitive school districts to attend preschool
- by making it easier to increase the per child reimbursement rates paid to preschool providers, and
- by requiring the Office of Early Childhood to develop a plan for universal access to preschool

SB 26 also moves childcare licensing from the Department of Health to the Office of Early Childhood. This is very important because licensing is the bottom rung of the quality ladder that that we want all early childhood programs to start climbing.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you and I am happy to answer any questions.



State of Connecticut

Office of Early Childhood

Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

Office of Early Childhood

Testimony before the Education Committee

S.B. 25 – An Act Establishing the Office of Early ChildhoodS.B. 26 – An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D., Executive Director

March 3, 2014

Good morning, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischman, ranking members Senator Boucher and Representative Ackert, and members of the Education Committee. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to address two bills before you today:

- S.B. 25 – An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood
- S.B. 26 – An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

To summarize the two proposed bills:

S.B. 25 would statutorily establish the Office of Early Childhood, moving early childhood programs spread across four state agencies into one agency.

S.B. 26 would create a pathway for Connecticut to expand School Readiness opportunities for young children, direct the Office of Early Childhood to develop a plan to achieve universal access to preschool, and increase quality in our child care licensing system.

Over the years, Connecticut has made significant investments in early childhood programs and has created several nationally recognized programs. But until now, the state has not been able to create the truly integrated, comprehensive early childhood system we need to ensure that all children in Connecticut reach their utmost potential, by providing children and their families with a coordinated system of early childhood services and supports. In addition, an integrated and comprehensive early childhood system would allow us to reach larger numbers of low-income, high-needs young children. Without this system, too many of our most vulnerable young children are not prepared to succeed in school and start off in life well behind their wealthier peers, a problem demonstrated in part by the state having one of the largest academic achievement gaps in the nation.

However, through our investments over the last decade, particularly over the last few years, Connecticut has laid a solid foundation to reverse this pattern through efforts to expand our

Phone: (860) 713-6410 • Fax: (860) 713-7037

165 Capitol Avenue

Hartford, Connecticut 06106

www.ct.gov/oec

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capacity to provide high-quality early learning and development services and, at the same time, increase the number of low-income, high-needs children enrolled in these programs.

These efforts include the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) by Governor Dannel Malloy through Executive Order #35 on June 24, 2013. This agency, overseeing a coordinated system of early childhood care, education and support, is currently comprised of:

- School Readiness, Child Day Care, state-funded Head Start, Even Start, Head Start Collaboration Office (formerly in the State Department of Education)
- The Children's Trust Fund (formerly in the Department of Social Services)
- Charts-a-Course (formerly in the Board of Regents)

As of July 1, 2014, the following programs will be integrated into the Office of Early Childhood:

- Care 4 Kids, Child Care and Development Fund (from the Department of Social Services)
- Child Day Care and Youth Camp Licensing (from the Department of Public Health)
- Pre-K Special Education (from the Department of Education)¹

As of October 1, 2014, The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Grant will move into the Office of Early Childhood from the Department of Public Health.

An independent Birth to Three study, evaluating the feasibility of moving the program to the Office of Early Childhood, has been completed and submitted to the Governor and co-chairs of the Appropriations Committee for review.

S.B. 25 – An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood

S.B. 25 would codify the Office of Early Childhood and lay out in detail the charge of the Office to ensure that young children are ready for school and lifelong success. The centralized accountability of the Office allows for a concerted focus on children from birth through age five through unified services, policy, budget, data, and outcome measurement. This governance structure allows Connecticut to implement its bold early childhood reform by accomplishing the following:

1. Improved outcomes for young children through better access and unified quality
2. Streamlined information for parents
3. Coordination across programs and services
4. Alignment of efforts to promote all aspects of child development
5. Efficiencies to avoid duplication and provide better value
6. Accountability for results and the quality and equitable distribution of programs

¹ Only the discretionary funds from IDEA Part B-619 (Early Childhood Special Education) will be transferred to OEC in order to ensure that the special education needs of young children are fully integrated throughout OEC's work. The portion that currently goes to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) will remain at the State Department of Education (SDE).

Though new, the Office of Early Childhood has hit the ground running. We are designing a universal developmental screening system, working with a seven-state consortia to develop a Kindergarten Entry Age tool, training providers on more effective learning standards, creating a Pre-K to Grade 3 strategy, integrating data systems for better accountability and decision-making, providing funds to improve program facilities, and awarding scholarships to early childhood providers for continued education. And we are getting ready to launch several more. For reference, I've included our current list of priority initiatives as an addendum.

By codifying the Office of Early Childhood into statute, it will give the Office the necessary statutory authority over its various programs, allowing the Office to enforce its regulatory authority if necessary. It also allows the Office to apply for federal funding and other funding opportunities that only state agencies are currently able to apply for.

The move to establish the Office of Early Childhood is a bold move and a smart investment. Connecticut has joined the ranks of a handful of states – Massachusetts, Washington, and Georgia – that lead the national with building truly comprehensive systems. A unified vision system and vision for early childhood leads to better outcomes for children, improved communication with parents, higher standards for providers, and more effective decision-making for policy makers.

S.B. 26 – An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

An estimated 4,000 low-income children live in our poorest communities and have no access to pre-kindergarten. The Governor has taken a bold step by calling for universal access to preschool in these districts for low-income children by 2019.

S.B. 26 makes statutory changes that will allow for expansion of early childhood opportunities for young children in Connecticut's Priority School Districts, Competitive School Districts and Alliance Districts. These changes include: 1) allowing Competitive School Districts with only one priority school (not two) to receive additional funding over the base funding, 2) allowing for an Alliance School District not in a Priority School District to receive School Readiness funding, and 3) removing the reimbursement cap for Priority and Competitive School Districts to allow for a 3 percent provider rate increase – a move toward higher quality.

The Governor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2015 provides \$11,511,904 for early learning opportunities for an additional 1,020 low-income children. The increased number of children served will be rolled out at the beginning of the 2015 academic year along with an increase in provider reimbursement rates and start-up funds to ensure programs are able to expand to meet the demand while continuing to provide high-quality care and education.

S.B. 26 also requires the Office of Early Childhood to develop and submit a plan to the Governor by January 1, 2015, to achieve universal access to pre-kindergarten within our state's poorest communities.

In addition, the bill makes statutory changes to require annual licensing inspections of licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. Currently, unannounced inspections of

licensed child day care centers and group day care homes are performed once every two years, and family day care homes every three years.

The move to annual inspections would be a significant step to address problems outlined in a number of recent independent reviews of Connecticut's child care licensing system. Reports from the Office of the Inspector General, Auditors of Public Accounts, National Association for Regulatory Administration, National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and Child Health & Development Institute highlight problems that require attention to ensure the state's youngest children are safe in their child care settings.

For context, the National Association for Regulatory Administration, a national organization, recommends a caseload of 50-60 cases/licensed sites or fewer per licensing inspector. Connecticut's inspectors currently have caseloads averaging 185 for licensed centers and group homes and averaging 265 for licensed family child care homes, more than triple the recommended caseload.

Finally, S.B. 26 would transfer youth camp licensing statutes from the Department of Public Health to the Office of Early Childhood. This will allow both the Child Day Care and Youth Camp Licensing Programs to transfer to the Office of Early Childhood and give the Office statutory authority over both programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My staff and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

ADDENDUM

Vision and Mission

Our mission and vision statements guide us as we integrate the work of these programs and build a coordinated system of care and support for young children and their families.

- **Our vision is that** all young children in Connecticut are safe, healthy, learning and thriving. Each child is surrounded by a strong network of nurturing adults who deeply value the importance of the first years of a child's life and have the skills, support and passion to meet the unique needs of every child.
- **Our Mission is to support** all young children in their development by ensuring that early childhood policy, funding, and services strengthen the critical role families, providers, educators, and communities play in a child's life.

Our Guiding Principles

- Build family-centered and family-driven systems for *all* children in Connecticut
- Prioritize children facing barriers, risks, setbacks or challenges to their healthy development
- Foster a deep respect for cultural differences in child rearing practices
- Honor families' diverse languages, values, strengths and needs
- Consider the whole child, his or her family, and his or her community setting
- Value early childhood as a time of learning through play and building positive relationships
- Ensure equal access to and parent choice within all early childhood services
- Operate in an efficient, coordinated, caring, professional and effective manner
- Confront and eliminate institutional racism and disparities
- Engage in continuous and system quality improvement
- Utilize current best practices, available research and data
- Nurture and value collaborative partnerships, innovation and self-reflection

Priority Initiatives

The Office has undertaken significant work in the past seven months to improve Connecticut's early childhood system to ensure that families have access to the highest quality early childhood services, preparing children for success in school and in life. We have identified the following systems-building strategies and initiatives to be developed and implemented over the next 18 months:

- **Quality Create** a universal early screening and referral system that will lead to children being screened more regularly and earlier identification of those with needs, allowing for earlier intervention and improved outcomes.

- Build a centralized early childhood information system (ECIS) that will make it easier to manage and analyze data to better inform policy and practice.
- Develop a plan for a coordinated home visiting system.
- Develop and implement a plan to coordinate early childhood technical assistance statewide to increase the quality of programs and services offered to young children.
- Act on recommendations from reports and assessments to improve the children care and youth camp licensing system to keep children healthy and safe in early childhood settings.
- Create a seamless and coordinated Birth to Five early care and education system that increases access, information and quality.
- Launch a public information campaign targeted to families, providers, and communities on the importance that starting earlier is better, quality matters, and the linkages to resources for accessing early childhood programs, services and support.



**Connecticut Education
Association**

Governance

Sheila Cohen, President
Jeff Leake, Vice President
Cheryl Prevost, Secretary
Thomas Nicholas, Treasurer
Kathy Flaherty, NEA Director
Pat Jordan NEA Director

Executive Office

Mark Waxenberg
Executive Director

Policy & Professional Practice

Dr. Linette Branham, Director
Capitol Place, Suite 500
21 Oak Street
Hartford, CT 06106-8001
860-525-5641, 800-842-4316
Fax 860-725-6328
www.cea.org

Affiliated with the
National Education Association

Ray Rossomando
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Education Committee

Regarding:

SB 25 AA Establishing the Office of Early Childhood

SB 26 AA Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

**HB 5043 AA Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor
Concerning Education**

**SB 282 AAC The Inclusion of Teen Dating Violence Education in the Public
School Curriculum**

**HB 5356 AAC The Inclusion of Social Media Education in the Public School
Curriculum**

HB 5357 AAC Chronic Absenteeism

March 3, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, Research and Policy Development Specialist with the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state.

SB 25 AA Establishing the Office of Early Childhood
SB 26 AA Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

CEA supports SB25 and SB26.

There are rare instances in public policy discussions when so many agree on one thing; expanding access to early childhood is one of them. Governor Malloy's proposal establishing an Office of Early Childhood further coordinates early childhood education opportunities in our state. Coupled with the expansion school readiness programs in HB 26 and increased funding that is part of Governor's Bill HB 5030, enhanced delivery of early childhood opportunities will ultimately improve student achievement while reducing the future costs of governmental programs, including costs associated with special education and child welfare.¹ A recent study found a return on investment in early childhood education of eleven to one.² Embracing Governor Malloy's early childhood education proposals is penny wise.

Additionally, Connecticut cannot realistically expect to narrow the achievement gap without addressing the readiness gap. Research shows that when preschool children learn about colors, letters, and numbers they have advantages over those who haven't begun that process until they first step foot in a public school. Young children who have more and richer opportunities to learn – opportunities that are often cost-prohibitive to families with lower incomes – are better prepared to learn than those without such opportunities.³ Expanding preschool access and affordability will go a long way toward equalizing educational opportunity and enhancing learning for all children.

CEA further recognizes that SB 25 preserves the intent of current law requiring those with primary responsibility for pre-school classrooms are qualified and possess certification as early childhood education educators. We urge members of the Education Committee to reject any changes that would delay or weaken this provision.

HB 5043 AA Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor
Concerning Education

CEA supports HB 5043.

HB 5043 primarily addresses magnet school funding relating to Sheff vs. O'Neill and the related goal of reducing racial isolation. For nearly twenty years, the state has substantially increased funding for school choice options. As was shown in a recent study conducted by Myron Orfield in Minnesota, some policies, like magnet school expansion, have been very successful in

¹ University of Minnesota (2011, February 4), "Early Childhood Education Program Yields High Economic Returns," Science Daily (Retrieved December 17, 2011).

² Reynolds, Arthur J., Judy A Temple, Barry A.B. White, Suh-Ruu Ou, Dylan L. Robertson. Age 26 Cost Benefit Analysis of the Child-Parent Center Early Education Program. *Child Development*, 2011, 82(1) 379 (Jan/Feb 2011)

³ Murnane, Richard J. and Greg J. Duncan, "Economic inequality: The real cause of the urban school problem." Chicago Tribune (10/6/2011)



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Education Committee
Testimony of Commissioner Stefan Pryor
March 3, 2014

Sen. Stillman, Rep. Fleischmann, Sen. Boucher, Rep. Ackert, and members of the Education Committee. Thank you for offering the opportunity to share some thoughts with you on a number of the bills on your agenda

SB 25: AA Establishing the Office of Early Childhood and SB 26: AA Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education

The Department offers strong support for both of these proposals. When the Governor and we at the State Department of Education articulated our education reform agenda back in 2011, we organized our agenda under six principles. The very first principle was, "Enhance families' access to early childhood education." We are pleased with the progress that we, in full partnership with the General Assembly, have made regarding early childhood investments to date. And we very much support continuing work and investment in this area. While the Office of Early Childhood operates as a separate entity, the State Department of Education is pleased to serve as the OEC's administrative home and is therefore pleased to offer support for the Office in the way of fiscal, legal, personnel and other services. While our agency focuses on K-12 education, under Governor Malloy's leadership we are working closely with partner agencies to ensure a full P-20 system for Connecticut students. With the new Office of Early Childhood and important efforts toward universal Pre-K, we are helping ensure that all students on a path to success.

HB 5043: AA Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education

This legislation primarily implements the provisions of the Phase 3 Sheff stipulation as agreed to by the plaintiffs and the State. It is essential that this stipulation be implemented in order to allow the Department to carry out the agreed upon work. Among this work is a new feature – the lighthouse school – which aims to help the Hartford Board of Education turn around a neighborhood school, and through that work, stabilize the surrounding community and strengthen the diversity of the area. The Department strongly supports this legislation and is committed to carrying out the associated work as we move forward.

HB 5355: AAC Collaboration Between Boards of Education and School Resource Officers

As with last year's legislation concerning this issue, the Department of Education favors this proposed legislation.

One of our objectives in the post-Sandy Hook period has been to support local efforts to enhance school safety and security while also advocating such efforts benefit from best practices and are undertaken thoughtfully. We aim to ensure that, when schools are justifiably fortified, we do not unintentionally create fortresses that no longer function in ways that are educationally sound. This legislative proposal aims to build upon the successes of similar programs in 13 districts across the state by requiring any district with a School Resource Officer to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with their local police department. This MOA will lay out the appropriate response for various student discipline issues within the school. In districts that have already put such a model in place, results have been reported including decreases in cases unnecessarily or inappropriately being referred to juvenile court, and progress being made in the disproportionate contact law enforcement personnel had with minority students.

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



COMMISSION ON CHILDREN

Testimony before the Education Committee
Submitted by Steven Hernández, Esq., Director of Public Policy and Research
Connecticut Commission on Children
March 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Ranking and other esteemed members of the Education Committee:

My name is Steven Hernández, Attorney and Director of Public Policy and Research for the Connecticut Commission on Children. I am here to offer the Commission's testimony in support of:

- S.B. 25, An Act Establishing The Office Of Early Childhood;
- H.B. 5355, An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards Of Education And School Resource Officers;
- S.B. 282, An Act Concerning The Inclusion Of Teen Dating Violence Education In The Public School Curriculum;
- H.B. 5356, An Act Concerning The Inclusion Of Social Media Education In The Public School Curriculum; and
- H.B. 5357, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism.

I will focus most of my testimony today in support of House Bill 5357, *An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism*.

Good attendance is essential to student achievement and graduation. Simply put, children must be in school to thrive academically. But too often, students, parents and schools don't realize how quickly absences – excused or unexcused – can leave children and youth falling behind. Chronic absence – missing 10 percent of the school year, or just 2-3 days each month – predicts lower third-grade reading proficiency, course failure and eventual dropout. Research shows that 10 percent is the threshold where absenteeism correlates to poor academic outcomes.

The impact hits children of color and low-income students particularly hard, especially if they don't have the resources to make up for lost time in the classroom. These children are more likely to face systemic barriers to getting to school – such as unreliable transportation or conflicting parent work schedules. Other factors that contribute to chronic absence may be situated in the family, school, and the community. They include but are not limited to high family mobility, low maternal education, food insecurity,

establishing a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan for the state. Such a plan would address:

An information strategy to engage community, families, and students on what chronic absence is, why regular attendance matters for success in school, and how strong school, community and family partnerships can improve student attendance.

The possibility of infrastructure and technical support to enable consistent and accurate attendance data collection disaggregated by school, grade and subgroups, including race, gender, free or reduced lunch, and English Language Learners.

The plan could also include a research-based, data-driven mentorship model that seeks to prevent and address chronic absenteeism, such as one being piloted successfully in New York City, and incentives and rewards to recognize schools and students that improve attendance, which may be in collaboration with the private sector and philanthropy.

CT is well-positioned to start this important work because, according to the State Department of Education, the state already tracks attendance and absences in our longitudinal student data systems. The State is poised to turn the curve on chronic absenteeism as a strategy to close the achievement gap and improve student outcomes generally. By codifying these best practices, we are taking a great “next step” in improving educational outcomes for our children.

I have attached the substance of the Commission’s recommendation to my testimony, and would be honored to assist the Committee as it moves forward with its deliberation.

In support of Senate Bill 25, I would like to incorporate by reference testimony provided in support of codifying an Office of Early Childhood, as presented by my Executive Director, Elaine Zimmerman before the Appropriations Committee on Monday, February 24, 2014. I have attached that testimony to my own in our submission.

In Support of House Bill 5355, I would like to incorporate by reference testimony I provided in support of the concept of MOUs between schools and local law enforcement to define the role law enforcement personnel as school resource officers in schools. We especially support the promotion of a graduated response model for student discipline in such memoranda. I’ve also attached that testimony to today’s submission for your reference.

With 9.4 percent of high school students nationwide reporting being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the 12 months prior to the survey,¹ and with more and more internet users ages 10-17 saying they have been the victim of “on-line harassment,” defined as threats or other offensive behavior sent on-line to someone or posted on-line,² we support the purposes behind Senate Bill 282 and House Bill 5356, respectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be honored to address any questions the Committee may have, or to provide further data or documentation “off-line.”

¹ http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html

² <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ea-brief-a.pdf>



Connecticut Association of
Boards of Education, Inc.

81 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109-1242 - (860) 571-7446

Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee
March 3, 2014

HB 5043 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR
CONCERNING EDUCATION

SB 26 AN ACT EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

HB 5355 AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND
SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

SB 25 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischman, members of the Education Committee, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education appreciates the opportunity to address the Governor's budget proposal.

HB 5043, An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education, continues to demonstrate the Governor's support for education, despite the state's fiscal constraints. CABE appreciates the support of the Governor and the Legislature to provide increases in education funding during the past 3 years, making Connecticut one of only a few states to do so. The economic challenges are faced at all levels of government, and felt most intensely at the local level during the current budget development and adoption season. Rising local costs, in addition to the increased expectations and related costs for implementation of Common Core State Standards, educator evaluation and support, and secondary school reform, will likely exceed the increases in the education cost sharing grant in all districts. For the Alliance Districts, the increase in ECS funding again comes with a requirement that the funds be expanded pursuant to a plan approved by the Commissioner. We urge you to insure that these districts have the flexibility to include support for existing initiatives in their plans.

The continuation of the cap on the special education excess cost grant, which was designed as the safety net for local school districts facing extraordinary individual student special education costs, creates fiscal uncertainty at the local level. Increasingly districts must reduce services to regular education students to fund the special education mandates. We urge you to make every effort to remove this cap. Delivery of these targeted services does decrease the offerings in the general education budget in a detrimental way. We are encouraged that the MORE Commission is studying special education.

CABE supports SB 26, An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and SB 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood. CABE applauds the creation of the Office of Early Childhood. It recognizes the partnership of community based and public school programs as well as more resources for educators. Additional resources for early childhood programs will allow many more young children to be better prepared as they enter kindergarten and greatly enhances their opportunities as lifelong learners. This programing will also help to decrease the achievement gap at its inception.

The provisions in HB 5355, An Act Concerning Collaboration between Boards of Education and School Resource Officers, concerning adoption of a policy or memorandum of understanding covering the role of school resources reflects the best practice that CABE recommends to school districts. The provision that requires additional data reporting concerning suspensions, expulsions and arrests places an additional burden on