

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

SA 14-22

SB424

House	6959-6962	4
Senate	1554-1557, 1572-1573	6
Education	501, 686-690, 709-711, <u>748-771</u>	93

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H – 1201

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

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6912 – 7260**

Those absent and not voting 6

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The bill, as amended, is passed.

Representative Aresimowicz.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that we immediately transmit to the Senate any items waiting further action.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Without objection, so ordered.

Representative Aresimowicz, I understand we have another Consent Calendar.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We are. We are about to list off the bills that will be included in our second Consent Calendar for the evening, sir.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Proceed, sir.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move -- I'd to add the following to the Consent Calendar. Calendar 426, Calendar 308, Calendar 438, Calendar 488 --

SB281
SB19
SB182
SB330

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

I apologize, Mr. Speaker. The first number was
427.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

So 427, thank you, sir. Proceed.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Calendar 476, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar
445, Calendar 514, Calendar 505, as amended by Senate
"A"; Calendar 455, Calendar 456, as amended by Senate
"A"; Calendar 322, Calendar 536, as amended by Senate
"A" and Senate "B"; Calendar 430, Calendar 520, as
amended by Senate "A" and Senate "B"; Calendar 538, as
amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 424, as amended by
Senate "A"; Calendar 439, as amended by Senate "A";
Calendar 482, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 325,
as amended by Senate "A."

Calendar 526, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar
509, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 532, Calendar
502, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 421, as
amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 431, as amended by
Senate "A"; and Calendar 539, as amended by Senate
"A."

SB 194
SB 402
SB 324
SB 45
SB 221
SB 257
SB 201
SB 389
SB 418
SB 438
SB 427
SB 260
SB 208
SB 424
SB 241
SB 14
SB 106
SB 322
SB 410
SB 217
SB 477
SB 429

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Is there objection to any of these items being placed on the Consent Calendar? If not, Representative Aresimowicz, would you like to move passage of the Consent Calendar?

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, I want to remove Calendar 539.

SB429

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Please remove Calendar 539, Mr. Clerk.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, I move passage of the bills on the second Consent Calendar of the day.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The question is on passage of the items on Consent Calendar Number 2.

Staff and guests please come to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll on the second Consent Calendar of the day, House Consent 2. Please report to the Chamber immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members
voted?

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

The Clerk will take a tally.

And the Clerk will announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Consent Calendar Number 2.

Total Number Voting 147

Necessary for Passage 74

Those voting Yea 147

Those voting Nay 0

Those absent and not voting 4

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The items on the Consent Calendar are passed.

(Speaker Sharkey in the Chair.)

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The House will please come back to order.

Will the Clerk please call Emergency Certified
Bill 5597.

THE CLERK:

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

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SENATE

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If not, I guess Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President.

If there is no objection, might we place this on the
Consent Calendar?

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

The House will -- the Senate will stand at ease for a moment.

(Senate at ease.)

Mr. Clerk, will you call the next on the Calendar, please.

THE CLERK:

On page 41, Calendar 254, Senate Bill Number 424, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, favorable report of the Committee on Education. There are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Take your time, Senator. It's okay.

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Good afternoon, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good afternoon.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

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I move the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark?

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes, thank you, Madam President.

The bill before you pretty much aligns itself with the title of the bill. But before I go into an explanation, I would like to ask the Clerk to call LCO Number 4572 and that I be allowed to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4572, Senate "A" offered by Senator Williams, 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, ma'am?

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes, thank you very much.

The amendment which is a strike all amendment and becomes the bill addresses the issue of a concern that's been raised that children who are in the custody of the Department of Children and Families may

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not be receiving an appropriate high quality preschool education. What this bill or amendment in front of us does is that it directs the two commissioners, the commissioner of the Department of Children and Families and the commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood to collaborate and consult with each other on gathering information and reporting to the General Assembly, to Committees of cognizance, and those committees are committees that have addressed matters relating to children, Human Services, Education, and Appropriations concerning the number of eligible preschool aged children and the plan that they suggest to put in place so that all children in DCF care are receiving early childhood education.

According to the information that I have of the 485 foster children especially between the ages of three and five, 221 are not in a preschool program. And so by having these two commissioners work together with their -- members of their agencies, they can come back to the General Assembly in January of next year and propose an appropriate, cost effective program to make sure that those children also receive a high quality early education. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark?

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I rise to support the bill and the amendment that is on the floor. The amendment does make this less of a mandate, however, the issue is a very important one that we support very strongly. The children that we are talking about in this particular amendment are those that already come with a tremendous amount of challenges, come from environments that are so difficult that they literally have to be taken out of their home setting and put in foster care. So in those situations, I think it becomes even more important and critical to find a good preschool program for them to be able to take

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advantage of. . So I think this is a very good bill and amendment and support it strongly and hope that the Chamber will do so as well. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, I'll try your minds on Senate "A" all those in favor of Senate "A" please say aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed?

Senate "A" carries.

Will you remark further? Will you remark further?

Seeing none, Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes, thank you, Madam President.

If there isn't any objection, I'd like to move the bill to the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, ma'am.

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 18, Calendar 418, Substitute for House Bill Number 5055, AN ACT ELIMINATING MUNICIPAL MANDATES, favorable report of the Committee on Planning and Development.

THE CHAIR:

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And also, Madam President, if I might move also that all of the bills announced for referral to various Committees in today's session that those bills be transmitted to the Committees to which they have been referred immediately and not held.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Seeing no objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

At this time if the Clerk would read the items on the Consent Calendar so we might proceed to a vote on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 1, Calendar 478, House Joint Resolution Number 76. On page 2, Calendar 479, House Joint Resolution Number 77, Calendar 480, House Joint Resolution Number 78, Calendar 481, House Joint Resolution Number 79, Calendar 482, House Joint Resolution Number 80, Calendar 483, House Joint Resolution Number 81. On page 3, Calendar 484, House Joint Resolution Number 82, Calendar 485, House Joint Resolution Number 83, Calendar 486, House Joint Resolution Number 84, and Calendar 47, House Joint Resolution Number 85. On page 12, Calendar 339, House Bill 5029. On page 38, Calendar 192, Senate Bill Number 2. And on page 41, Calendar 254, Senate Bill Number 424.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote on the -
- on the Consent Calendar. The machine is open.

THE CLERK:

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Immediate roll call is ordered in the Senate on today's first Consent Calendar. Immediate roll call ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

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

THE CLERK:

On the Consent Calendar for today.

Total Number Voting	36
Necessary for Adoption	19
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes.

Are there any points of personal privilege or announcements? Any points of personal privilege or announcements?

Seeing none, Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if there are no announcements or points of personal privilege, it is our intention tomorrow to commence with a Democratic Caucus tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. followed by -- followed by Session. And at this point, Madam President, if there is no -- no additional comments or comments for announcement of Committee meetings in advance of the session tomorrow, I would move the Senate stand adjourned subject to the Call of the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will stand adjourned subject to the Chair.

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**EDUCATION
PART 1
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way they are and start fresh somehow so that these kids don't fall through the holes.

SENATOR BYE: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions? We really appreciate your patience and your input, so that's why we're doing this. So thank you very much.

CHARLOTTE GIANNOTTI: Thank you.

SENATOR BYE: Next up is Merrill Gay to be followed by Deborah Stevenson.

MERRILL GAY: Good evening, Chairman Fleischmann, Chairman Bye, members of the Committee. My name is Merrill Gay. I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. I'm here to speak on two bills that I've submitted testimony on, Senate Bill 424, which is about requiring DCF to enroll three and four-year-olds in their custody in preschool.

I have realized that there was a mistake in that testimony. I said that 56 percent of kids were, of that group were in preschool. It's actually the inverse. It's 44, meaning the problem is even worse, and that makes the argument of why this ought to be required that much more compelling.

What I really want to focus my remarks on today is House Bill 5522, which would change the school readiness reimbursement rate for the full day, full year slots.

If you have my testimony in front of you there are two tables in there that may provide a different way of looking at the school readiness reimbursement rate. There are four different types of school readiness slot.

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**EDUCATION
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March 12, 2014
12:00 P.M.

Balance and that the Smarter Balance is coming next week.

So I agree that Norwalk has gone full steam ahead with Common Core implementation and I see the positive effects in my own household with that implementation.

GWEN SAMUEL: (Inaudible). They're created an environment that makes you look forward to the test, and I think it's the way they're framing it. I still believe the teachers are teaching content versus necessarily the test and (inaudible) more about Common Core. Let's not underestimate our youngsters. They know more about it than we are, so I think we should give your youngsters more credit for understanding, bringing (inaudible) to the classroom than the adults bring this conversation this evening.

SENATOR BYE: Okay. Representative --

GWEN SAMUEL: (Inaudible) because of the information she brought home from school regarding it.

REP. LAVIELLE: Thank you.

SENATOR BYE: Are you set?

REP. LAVIELLE: Yes. One final sentence. You've certainly pointed out the fallacy of one-size-fits-all. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR BYE: Thank you all for coming. Thank you for your patience. We appreciate it. Michelle Duffany, followed by Edie Joseph, followed by Lisa Sabitz. Lisa? Oh, Edie. Yeah. Sorry.

EDIE JOSEPH: Good evening and thanks for your time. My name is Edie Joseph and I'm testifying on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children. I'm here tonight to talk about the importance of

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HB5522

pre-kindergarten education, something I think that most everyone in the room can agree with.

So Connecticut Voices for Children, we strongly support Senate Bill 424 and House Bill 5522, two bills that address the need for high-quality early care in education in Connecticut.

Senate Bill 424 requires the Department of Children and Families to enroll each pre-school aged child in their caring custody in an eligible pre-school program.

We know that pre-kindergarten is the single most important factor contributing to kindergarten readiness. For youth in the care and custody of the state, youth who don't have parents to be here tonight speaking on their behalf, these youth who are often detached from family and community in a way that other children are not, pre-school takes on even additional importance,

Children involved in the child welfare system are at a high risk for developmental delays, poor academic success and socio-emotional issues, all of which early education services can help mitigate or ameliorate.

Unfortunately, preliminary evidence suggests that the state is not meeting their obligation of statutory parents to provide a high-quality early learning experience. Currently, as many as half of pre-school aged children in DCF care are not in pre-school, and by third grade, children in DCF's care lags far behind their peers in standardized tests.

Pre-kindergarten can help close this opportunity gap for abused and neglected children.

To further strengthen this legislation, we recommend that there be increased collaboration between DCF and the new Office of Early Childhood, expanding the provisions of Connecticut school stability legislation and ensuring that children remain enrolled in pre-school for the entire year, even if they exit DCF care.

Overall, we just want to stress that this bill is crucial for Connecticut's most vulnerable three and four-year-olds who again, don't have parents to speak on their behalf in this room today.

In addition, we also strongly support Senate Bill 5522, which increases school readiness funding. We know that for pre-kindergarten to have maximal impact, it must be high quality.

The Governor's proposed budget revisions demonstrate a clear commitment to this quality by increasing access to accredited programs and by increasing the rate of slots by three percent. H.B. 5522 further increases the rate of school readiness slots but unfortunately, it doesn't increase them enough to account for the true cost of high-quality care.

In particular, rate increases are needed to increase compensation to attract and retain well qualified teachers, teachers whom we've heard from all night and know how incredibly hardworking that they are.

Studies show that the true per child cost of high-quality full day, full year care is between \$12,000 and \$18,000, significantly higher than the \$9,000 proposed rate. Several studies across the country and in Connecticut themselves have confirmed that this rate is

much higher, again than the \$9,000 proposed rate.

To improve quality and stand up for Connecticut's children, we urge the Legislature to take bold steps and further increase funding for early childhood and to increase pre-school access for children in the care and custody of DCF. Thanks for the opportunity to testify.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you for your testimony and your advocacy, particularly in support of the bill that I've worked on with the Early Childhood Alliance, to try and equalize --

EDIE JOSEPH: We really appreciate that.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: -- the rates of pay for full day, versus part day care. I had a quick question for you, but I'm so tired I've forgotten it. Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Edie, thank you. The number, actually by an earlier testifier was 44, only 44 percent, actually, so it's less than the 50, the numbers are receiving that opportunity.

And I don't know if you know, how many children are we actually talking about? Do you have a rough number on that?

EDIE JOSEPH: Sure. So it's about 395, three, four and five-year-olds who are currently in state care, and yeah, it's about 56 percent who we are not sure have access currently.

REP. ACKERT: Do we know why that hasn't been, you know, addressed, or maybe it has been attempted? Is it just, you know, I don't want to blame a department, you know, is there a hurdle that we have to come over?

EDIE JOSEPH: So we know anecdotally that it's likely that more children than that 44 percent are enrolled in pre-kindergarten, but we don't know for sure because DCF isn't capturing that data and so again, it's not a 100 percent accurate number. There might be more children than we know of, but you know, even if there's one single child who isn't currently in pre-kindergarten who's in DCF care, that's an issue that we need to work on.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you again for your testimony and your advocacy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Any other questions? If not, thank you very much.

EDIE JOSEPH: Thanks again.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Appreciate your time. Is Lisa Sabitz still here? She's to be followed by Ray Rossomando who I saw here a few minutes ago.

LISA BETH SABITZ: Good evening, and thank you to the Education Committee for this opportunity to speak. I am Lisa Beth Sabitz, appearing on behalf of the Connecticut PTA. Our organization's President, Don Romoser is unable to be here today because he is with PTA leaders from across the country at the National PTA Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

He's already submitted testimony opposing both H.B. 5078 and H.B. 5331 on behalf of the over 44,000 PTA members in the State of Connecticut.

I will not take up your time repeating his points. The bottom line is that the PTA has advocated for standards like this for 33 years. We know there is still work to be done, but it should be allowed to proceed.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Is Alexander, Alexandra Dufresne still here? Oh, wow.

ALEXANDRA DUFRESNE: (Inaudible).

REP. FLEISCHMANN: You're showing real staying power tonight. Welcome.

ALEXANDRA DUFRESNE: I'm so happy to be here. Thank you for staying.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: You will be followed by Jack Bryant if he's still here.

ALEXANDRA DUFRESNE: Hi. So I'm Alexandra Dufresne. I'm a staff attorney at the Center for Children's Advocacy, which is a nonprofit law firm that's dedicated to protecting the legal rights of the state's most vulnerable children.

I'm one of the child protection attorneys, which means that my job is to represent abused and neglected children. I'm appointed by the Juvenile Court. I have clients all the way from newborns to 18-year-olds.

I'm not here for the Common Core today. I'm here to show my strong support for Senate Bill 424, which would require the Department of Children and Families to enroll all pre-school aged children in a high quality pre-school, the high quality or an eligible pre-schools defined in the bill.

I saw the testimony that was submitted two weeks ago on the Governor's pre-school bill and I know many of you are the strongest advocates for pre-school in the state. I'm not going to go through that data. You know it much, much better than I do.

What I want to do is share a little bit of past experience and then give the little bit that shows how these children are differently situated from other children in our state.

Just a benchmark, the staff that we've been talking to, because I was the one who did the data request at DCF about the 44 percent, the number that came back was that 44 percent of the kids are currently enrolled in pre-school.

To benchmark that you probably are familiar with statewide, the rate is 80 percent. Even the poorest DRGs, in DRG I, we're talking about 69 percent in DRG A was 95 percent, an average of 85 percent. DCF is hitting about 44 percent. It might be that in fact more children are enrolled and I hope that's the case, but DCF isn't able to say. We basically don't have a way of counting of where their children are, where their pre-schoolers are and whether they're enrolled.

The second thing I want to talk about these kids is that the total number that we're talking about that we would like to see pre-school for is extremely small number, because the number of kids who are actually committed to the State of Connecticut is extremely small.

DCF has done a fantastic job recently in bringing down the numbers, fantastic. We want to commend the department for that. So the total population is 395 children.

If you take the percentage who are not yet in pre-school we're talking about 220 children, 220 children. Just to put that in perspective, the state's Race to the Top application says that already, Connecticut is serving 22,000 children of this age group in high quality

learning environments. That's fantastic.
Connecticut is doing great.

I'm just asking for slots for the 220 kids who are my kids on my caseload. And like my colleague said so forcefully, I'm so moved by all the parents who are here. When you talk about who these kids parents are, by definition the Department of Children and Families is the parent of these children, and I don't just mean metaphorically or symbolically. It is legally the parent. A private actor does not have the authority to step in here.

These biological parents have forfeited their right due the very abuse, neglect. A foster parent does not have the legal authority to enroll the child in pre-school. The only entity that has that legal right, that has a monopoly on the education rights of these children is the Department of Children and Families. Thank you so much.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, and this Committee recognizes the truth of what you just said. That's why the bill is before us. Are there questions from members of the Committee? If not, thank you very much for your advocacy and your testimony and your patience.

ALEXANDRA DUFRESNE: Thank you so much. Good night.
Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Is Jack Bryant still here? How about Robert Cotto? Jennifer Herz. Welcome.

JENNIFER HERZ: Thank you. Good evening, Senator
Bye, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Ackert, Senator Boucher, I am Jennifer Herz, Assistant Counsel at CBIA, which is the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, and I am here tonight for the top concern for

AB5078

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
 OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE
 999 ASYLUM AVENUE, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105



Sarah Healy Eagan
 Acting Child Advocate

**Testimony of Sarah Eagan, Acting Child Advocate
 In Support of A Raised Bill Regarding Access to Quality Pre-Kindergarten for Children in
 the Care of the Department of Children and Families**

SB424

March 11, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleishman, Senator Bye, Representative McCrory and distinguished members of the Education Committee: I appreciate the opportunity to offer this testimony today in support of **Preschool for Children in DCF Care**.

The mandate of the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) includes evaluating the delivery of state funded services to children and advocating for policies and practices that promote their well-being and protect their special rights.

According to DCF, over 50 % of preschool-age children in the care and custody of DCF are not documented as being enrolled in preschool.¹ DCF currently serves approximately 400 abused and neglected preschool-age children who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care.

We must ensure that our most vulnerable young children, 3 to 5 year olds who have been abused or neglected by their caregiver, are afforded every opportunity to learn and grow. Research confirms that preschool attendance is the most important factor for kindergarten readiness. This is especially true for at-risk, high need children.

Young children in DCF care are much more likely than typical peers to have developmental delays and impairments by age 3. Research supported by the Department of Health and Human Services demonstrates that 40% of 3 year old toddlers that even touch a child welfare investigation, even if they do not go into foster care, present with a developmental delay or impairment that could qualify them for Birth-to-Three services.² (Further underscoring the critical need to ensure developmental screening and prompt referral for quality early intervention for infants and toddlers who have suffered abuse or neglect.)

¹ See October 29, 2013 email from DCF to Alexandra Dufresne, attorney at the Center for Children's Advocacy.

² National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being, 2012 (Wave II), found on the web at:
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nscaw_wave_ii_permanency_report_one_page_overview.pdf

Providing quality preschool to abused and neglected children will promote healthy social-emotional, cognitive and physical development. Children who attend high quality preschool are more likely to be academically and socially prepared for kindergarten, have lower retention rates, and are less likely to need special education services. Research also confirms that preschool attendance for high need children increases high school graduation rates. Currently, of children who exit DCF foster care after age 18, only 65% leave with a high school diploma.³ **The federal government is focused on increasing early intervention and education opportunities for high-need young children.** The most recent *Race to the Top* opportunity was all about assisting states with ensuring quality early childhood education opportunities for underserved and high-need children. *Race to the Top* criteria outlined that “high-need” children included children who were being served by the state child welfare system.

Federal child welfare law, the Adoption and Safe Families Act, requires that states ensure the medical and educational needs of children in foster care are met. Based on what we know now about the imperative of quality early childhood education, particularly for high need children, it is essential that we provide such opportunities for abused and neglected preschool age children in DCF care.

The State acts as the parent for these children in foster care. The most important question we can ask about how we serve abused and neglected children is this:

Are these children better off because of the support and protection the state provided?

Connecticut can and should maximize Head Start and public school slots for DCF-committed children. Last year, of the roughly 9,000 Head Start slots statewide, only 168 went to children in DCF foster care.⁴ This is true despite the fact that children who have been abused or neglected are given priority for Head Start placement. It should be noted, that another 400 families in Head Start last year were receiving some type of child welfare support or supervision.

This data reveals that approximately 250 abused and neglected preschool-age children were not documented as being enrolled in school this past year. This is a surmountable challenge with existing community preschool slots. We must ensure that DCF has the resources and data reporting capacity to confirm enrollment of all preschool age children in quality early childhood education.

The Governor and this Legislature have been champions of early childhood education. Our law and policy makers have rightfully set out on a mission to provide universal preschool in Connecticut, an essential step to ensuring the well-being of all our children and closing the Achievement Gap. A critical component of this mission will be to ensure that the roughly 400 young children in DCF care have access to quality early childhood education.

³ See PRI report, Department of Children and Families Services to Prepare Youth Aging out of Care, pg 42 <http://www.cga.ct.gov/pri/docs/2013/DCF%20Age%20Out%20Staff%20F&R%20Report.pdf>

⁴ See October 2, 2013 email from Grace Whitney, Director, Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office, to Alexandra Dufresne, Attorney at the Center for Children’s Advocacy. See also Note 1, supra.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sarah Eagan, J.D.
Acting Child Advocate

Testimony in Support of
S.B. 424: An Act Concerning Access to Preschool Programs for Children in the Care and Custody of the Department of Children and Families
H.B. 5522 An Act Concerning School Readiness Funding
Edie Joseph, Kenneth Feder, and Cyd Oppenheimer, J.D.
Education Committee
March 12, 2014

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Stillman, and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

We are testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a 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 supports S.B. 424 and H.B. 5522, two bills that address the need for high-quality early care and education in Connecticut.

I. S.B. 424

Connecticut Voices strongly supports S.B. 424, which requires that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) enroll each preschool-aged child in its care and custody in a high-quality preschool program. We feel this legislation could be strengthened by:

- Requiring increased collaboration between DCF and the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to ensure that social workers can navigate Connecticut's complex early childhood landscape;
- Expanding and enhancing the provisions of Connecticut's school stability legislation for children in foster care under CGS 17a-16a to ensure it applies to children in preschool;
- Specifying the party responsible for providing transportation to preschool;
- Ensuring that children remain enrolled in preschool for the entire year, even if they exit DCF care;
- Adding reporting requirements; and
- Adopting best practices from other states for providing a high quality early learning experience to abused and neglected children.

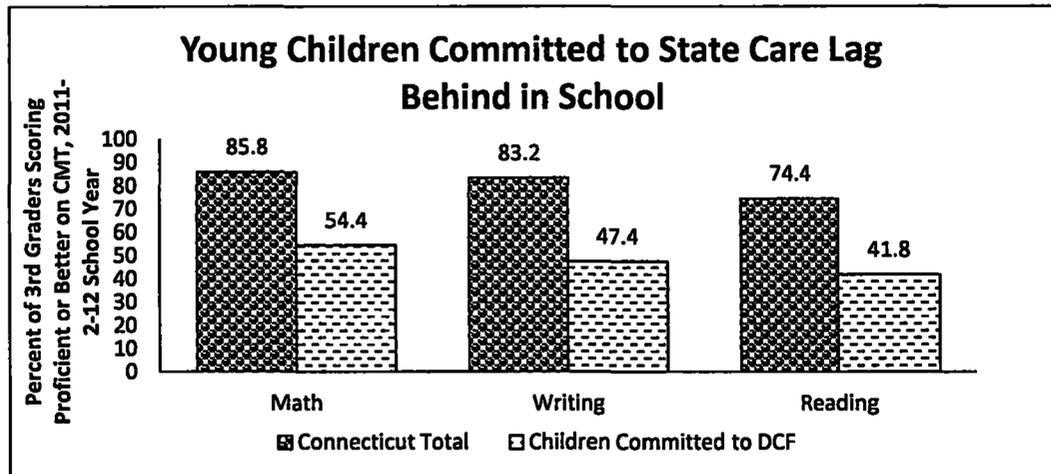
The Need for Preschool

Affordable, high-quality early care and education is essential to Connecticut's children and families. Children who attend nurturing, responsive, and language-rich early care and education programs are more likely to be prepared socially and academically for kindergarten, less likely to be retained or need special education services, and more likely to graduate from high school and become productive members of the workforce.¹ Prekindergarten is the single most important factor contributing to kindergarten readiness, and can make the greatest difference for low-income and at-risk children.²

For youth in the care or custody of the state, youth who are often detached from family and community in a way that other children are not, preschool takes on additional importance.³

In fact, “Children involved in the child welfare system are the most at-risk for developmental delays, poor academic success, and socio-emotional issues— all of which early education services can help mitigate or ameliorate, especially for children from low-income families.”⁴ Because Connecticut has removed children from their families and assumed the responsibilities of statutory parent, it has a legal and ethical obligation to ensure children in its care receive necessary early childhood developmental and educational services. Unfortunately, preliminary evidence suggests that not enough is being done to provide children in foster care with high-quality early childhood education.⁵

- Currently, DCF only knows for certain that about half of all preschool-aged children in their care and custody are enrolled in preschool.⁶
- Because DCF does not always track which program the children are in and/or whether the program is accredited, it is very difficult to determine how many preschool-aged children are receiving a high-quality early learning experience.
- By third grade, the first time students take state standardized tests, children in foster care are already behind in school (see chart below).⁷



These data document a troubling early learning “opportunity gap” between young children in foster care and other Connecticut students. While additional research is needed to quantify and analyze the causes, extent, and impact of this opportunity gap, enrolling all children in foster care in a high quality preschool program is an evidenced based strategy that will almost certainly ensure these young children are more prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

Furthermore, Connecticut has already recognized that young children in State care require strong early childhood educational and developmental supports. In 2013, Connecticut passed legislation requiring infants and toddlers who are victims of substantiated child abuse or neglect to be screened for developmental delays and referred to the state’s IDEA Part C early intervention program (Birth-to-Three) to ensure that they do not slip “through the cracks,” but instead receive the developmentally-appropriate services they require.⁸ This legislation was motivated by research that shows that young children who are victims of abuse and neglect are far more likely to suffer from developmental delays than their peers and that early intervention is essential for supporting children who suffer from disabilities and developmental delays.⁹ Unfortunately, without requiring

that children then be enrolled in high-quality prekindergarten, the benefits of this positive intervention may be undermined.

Capacity to Serve Children in DCF

This session, the Governor has proposed an expansion of School Readiness, which will create an additional 1,020 subsidized high-quality preschool slots in FY 15.¹⁰ Although DCF does not track whether all preschool-aged children in its care and custody attend prekindergarten, it can say that at most 220 of its preschool-aged children are not currently enrolled in prekindergarten.¹¹ Moreover, all children in foster care are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and DCF knows that 168 of its children are currently enrolled in such programs.¹² The DCF – Head Start partnership could be well-suited for the slight expansion this legislation will require. To the extent that DCF must enroll children in private or partially subsidized slots, DCF, as the statutory parent, must be required to cover the parent fee charge.

Improve Coordination with the Office of Early Childhood

Connecticut's early childhood landscape is program-rich but system-poor, and finding and enrolling children in a high-quality preschool program can be challenging. The new Office of Early Childhood (OEC) has the capacity to take a broad view of early childhood programs in Connecticut, and create an effective and comprehensive early childhood *system* that better meets the needs of all children and families. Research suggests that cross-system collaboration is necessary to build comprehensive early learning environments, particularly for vulnerable children in foster care.¹³ The OEC could help DCF navigate the district-specific array of early childhood programs (including magnet schools, Head Start programs, public school School Readiness programs and private or community-based School Readiness programs), identify openings in these programs, and help with the enrollment process. Moreover, as School Readiness programs are only in high-need districts, the OEC could help identify programs and slots available for children in DCF care regardless of where they might live. In order to effectively implement S.B. 424, DCF and the OEC should work collaboratively to ensure that caregivers, case-workers, foster parents, early care and education facilities, and public schools are all working together in the best interests of the child.

Expand School Stability Protections to Preschool

Concurrent state and federal "school stability" legislation protect the right of children in foster care to remain in their school of origin even if their placement changes, provided that doing so is in their best interests.¹⁴ Connecticut law also requires that, when children in foster care do change schools, they be enrolled expediently and that their educational records be transferred immediately.¹⁵ These protections were established in response to local and national research which demonstrate that placement in foster care often leads to frequent school changes during which education records are lost and learning is disrupted.¹⁶ However, Connecticut's current law only offers these protections to school-age children and children aged three to five who have identified disabilities.¹⁷ As Connecticut seeks to provide quality preschool to all children in foster care, we should expand the definition of "child" in the school stability statute – CGS 17a-16a – to include all children aged three to five, so that these young children are similarly protected from unnecessary frequent school transfers, and will be enrolled in preschool immediately with expedient transfer of educational records, as is best practice.¹⁸

Specify the Party Responsible for Providing Transportation

Anecdotal evidence from across the state suggests that transportation is a significant barrier to accessing early education programs. Unlike in grades K-12, parents are typically responsible for transporting their own children to preschool. This barrier is particularly challenging for children in foster care, who have been removed from their parents. Foster parents may not all be able to transport young children in their care to preschool. Therefore, we recommend that S.B. 424 require DCF to collaborate with foster parents, preschool programs and, when necessary, the OEC, to develop a transportation plan for each child in DCF care who is enrolled in preschool. Furthermore, DCF should pay any additional cost of transportation to preschool beyond that to which the child would otherwise have access, and should maximize federal reimbursement for transportation under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act for all eligible children. This is no more than is required of DCF and school districts under current school stability law, and no more than any parent of reasonable means would do for his or her child. Connecticut is already making a commendable commitment to expanding the number of preschool slots available to high need children – the state should ensure that these slots are not inaccessible to those children who have the most need simply because they do not have transportation for school.

Keep Children Enrolled After Exiting Care

Children who exit foster care to permanency – because they are reunified with parents, are in a pre-adoptive setting, adopted, or placed in the guardianship of a relative – should not lose their access to preschool because they are no longer in State care. S.B. 424 should prohibit any preschool program from discharging a child who exits the foster care system for what might otherwise be geographic ineligibility. Furthermore, if DCF stops paying its share of preschool tuition when a child exits care, the child may stop attending school because his parent or guardian is unable to assume the cost. This risk of discontinuity is harmful for children in foster care who already experience immense trauma and upheaval in their lives, and is particularly harmful for young children. Studies have documented that schedules and routines influence children’s emotional, cognitive, and social development, and that predictable and consistent schedules in preschool classrooms help children feel secure and comfortable.¹⁹ Continuity of care is critical for development, particularly in very young children. Sustained stable relationships with caregivers allow children to form positive, secure attachments which build the healthy brain architecture that increases the odds of desirable outcomes – including health, academic, and emotional – later in life.²⁰ To ensure that vulnerable young children are not forced to trade their education for a family, DCF should continue to pay expenses associated with preschool enrollment until the conclusion of the school year in which a child exits care.

Track Progress Toward Universal Enrollment

Currently, DCF does not capture how many of its children are enrolled in preschool programs, and/or the quality of such preschool programs, outside of its children enrolled in Head Start.²¹ This is an important quality measure of whether the Department is meeting the educational needs of children in its care. S.B. 424 should require that DCF track this data, and report such data to the Legislature.

Best Interest Exemption

We support the exemption in S.B. 424 that would allow DCF to not enroll a child in preschool if “such enrollment is determined by the department to not be in the child’s best interest.” This best interest exemption could be properly used in situations in which enrolling a child in preschool

would: create a barrier to permanency, separate a child from his/her sibling(s), be developmentally inappropriate, or jeopardize his/her health, safety, or well-being.

Best Practices

States across the country are taking strides to ensure access to high-quality early care and education for their youth in foster care, with creative models that Connecticut could emulate. Examples of these practices include:

- **Social work positions specific to increasing foster youth enrollment in prekindergarten.** In California, an advocacy group comprised of child welfare and education professionals helped the county create a new social work position responsible for coordinating and increasing the preschool enrollment of youth in foster care.²²
- **Trainings for care-givers, service providers, and other professionals to educate and increase advocacy for the educational needs of this population.**²³ If Connecticut were to adopt such training, 75% of the expense would be reimburseable under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.²⁴
- **Checklists and advocacy tools.** Washington State developed the Dependent Child's Educational Checklist for care providers, composed of questions to address enrollment and attendance issues, school progress, and educational decision-making responsibility to ensure that the child's needs are being addressed.²⁵

When Connecticut takes young children away from their families to protect them from abuse and neglect, it assumes statutory and ethical responsibility for parenting them. As the state seeks to expand its investment in providing quality early learning experiences to *all* children, it is essential that those children to whom the state bears a unique parental responsibility, and who stand to benefit most from high-quality early childhood education, are not forgotten. Supporting **S.B. 424**, and adopting the recommendations presented in this testimony, will help ensure that children who must be removed from their families are still provided with educational opportunity.

II. H.B. 5522

Connecticut Voices for Children also supports **H.B. 5522: An Act Concerning School Readiness**, which increases the per child reimbursement for full-day and half-day school readiness programs, and establishes a maximum rate of nine thousand dollars and four thousand five hundred dollars for such programs, respectively. However, we urge the legislature to substantially increase such rates to account for the true cost of high-quality care.

The Need for Slot and Rate Increases

The research is clear: access to prekindergarten leads to better outcomes in school and in life. Prekindergarten education is a crucial investment in our children's future and our state's future. Studies show that every dollar invested in high-quality early care and education can yield returns of up to seven dollars in savings through reduction of remedial and special education, welfare, and criminal justice services.²⁶ The research is also clear that for prekindergarten to have maximal impact, it must be high quality. The Governor's proposed budget revisions demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring that the state's most economically vulnerable children have access to high-quality, accredited programs by both expanding the number of slots available for prekindergarten

and by increasing the rate of slots by 3%.²⁷ H.B. 5522, which further increases the rate of school readiness slots, builds on and expands the Governor's proposal.

True Cost of High-Quality Care

Although we applaud the proposed rate increase in H.B. 5522, the state must further increase rates to establish a rate that takes into account the true cost of high-quality care. Maximum rates of nine thousand dollars for a full-day program, and four thousand five hundred for a part day program (which, in fact, is not an increase at all from the current rate) are not sufficient for these ends.

The true cost of high-quality care should take into account critical structural elements that facilitate optimal development for children, such as caregiver compensation, education, specialized training, and adult to child ratio.²⁸ In particular, rate increases are needed to attract and retain well-qualified teachers. Training and education are crucial for effective early childhood educators. Well-qualified teachers promote child development and learning by creating supportive and healthy learning environments, developing relationships with family and community, and building meaningful curriculum.²⁹ As a report by the National Institute for Early Education Research explains, "*inadequate teacher compensation lowers preschool program quality and leads to poorer cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes for children.*"³⁰ Current compensation for prekindergarten teachers is not competitive with professionals with similar qualifications: the average starting salary for an elementary school teacher in Connecticut is \$42,450; the average salary for a prekindergarten teacher, in contrast, is \$29,500.³¹

Poor compensation can not only make it harder to attract highly qualified and effective teachers, it can make it difficult to retain them. Annual turnover for preschool teachers can be as high as 25% to 50% per year, in contrast to less than 7% for public school teachers.³² High teacher turnover negatively impacts children's learning and development.³³ For current early childhood educators to afford the courses they need to meet the rigorous educational credentialing requirements of P.A. 11-54³⁴ – and to keep them in the field once they have obtained higher degrees – higher compensation is necessary. It is also necessary if we are to attract and retain the additional teachers we will need as we increase the number of children we serve. A 2009 report on the work of the Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council found that "*If we make no other investment, investments in the quality of early childhood program staff is key. Connecticut must increase investments in early childhood education programs to support salary levels needed to recruit and retain teachers with degrees in early childhood education.*"³⁵ Unfortunately, the proposed rate increases are insufficient to allow programs to offer salaries that will attract and retain teachers with bachelor degrees.

Studies show that the true per-child cost of high-quality, full-day, full-year care is between \$12,000 and \$18,000. A Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) early childhood education cost modeling tool shows that a program with 18 children, one teacher with a B.A. and one teacher's aide, both with five years experience, would cost \$17,155 per child.³⁶ In New Jersey, the largest state-run preschool program costs \$12,846 per child.³⁷ This program, which is widely recognized as a model, meets nine out of 10 National Institute for Early Education Research benchmarks of quality, as compared to School Readiness programs in Connecticut meeting six out of 10.³⁸ In New York, the Citizens Budget Commission has estimated that "per pupil spending for the pre-k population would equal K-12 general education spending,"³⁹ which in New York in 2011 was approximately \$19,100.⁴⁰ Connecticut, meanwhile, spent approximately \$15,600 per K-12 student, and could therefore reasonably expect to spend a similar amount on its prekindergarten

students.⁴¹ In California, a 2009 report by the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families, found the average per-child cost of high quality preschool was \$18,239.⁴² Though all of these estimates vary in terms of their exact quality and other mandated requirements, they consistently demonstrate that the true cost of high-quality care is well above the proposed nine thousand dollars.⁴³

Though we applaud the rate increase in H.B 5522, this increase alone is insufficient to fund the true cost of high-quality care, including paying our early childhood educators a competitive wage that appropriately acknowledges the important work they do in educating and shaping Connecticut's youngest children. To improve quality and stand up for Connecticut's children –and our state's future –we urge the legislature to take bold steps and further increase funding for early childhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

¹ Susan H. Landry, "Effective Early Childhood Programs" The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (2005), available at: <http://www.childrenslearninginstitute.org/library/publications/documents/Effective-Early-Childhood-Programs.pdf>.

² Debra Ackerman and Steven Barnett, "Preparedness for Kindergarten: What Does 'Readiness' Mean?" Preschool Policy Brief, National Institute for Early Education Research (March 2005): 12, available at <http://nieer.org/resources/policyreports/report5.pdf>.

³ For more on the education of youth in State care, see Kenneth Feder and Tamara Kramer, J.D., "Raise the Grade: Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in State Care," Connecticut Voices for Children, (January 2014), available at: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/raise-grade-improving-educational-opportunities-children-state-care>.

⁴ "Policy Brief - Early Care & Education Access for Maltreated Children in LA County," The Advancement Project, available at: <http://www.advancementprojectca.org/sites/default/files/imce/Policy%20Brief%20-%20ECE%20Access%20for%20Maltreated%20Children%20in%20LA%20County%20copy.pdf>

⁵ See, Kenneth Feder and Tamara Kramer, J.D., "Raise the Grade: Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in State Care," Connecticut Voices for Children, (January 2014), available at: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/raise-grade-improving-educational-opportunities-children-state-care>.

⁶ See email from Fred North at DCF to Alexandra Dufresne, October 29, 2013, forwarded to Edie Joseph and Kenneth Feder on March 10, 2014. "Preschool-aged" refers to children ages 3-5 who are not enrolled in kindergarten or first grade. "Enrolled in preschool" for purposes of these figures includes children in Head Start and in center-based care, which may include center-based care that would not meet the definition of "high-quality preschool" contemplated by this bill. These figures, however, may not include children served by home-based childcare settings. In addition, in this correspondence, Mr. North notes "Please note that there is a large group of kids in placement within this age range for whom we do not have any school data entered. This may not be a fact of missing data, just that they are not presently attending any form of preschool program; but it is impossible to tell the degree to which that is true without a case review."

⁷ See, Kenneth Feder and Tamara Kramer, J.D., "Raise the Grade: Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in State Care," Connecticut Voices for Children, (January 2014), available at: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/raise-grade-improving-educational-opportunities-children-state-care>.

⁸ See, Connecticut General Assembly Public Act 13-234 Section 154.

⁹ "Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care, Second Edition," The Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, (2008), available at: http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/portals/0/dmx/2012%5C09%5Cfile_20120924_161919_eDinU_0.pdf. A2005 national study of 2,813 children in care found 40% of toddlers and 50% of preschoolers had significant behavioral and developmental needs.

¹⁰ For more on the Governor's proposed budget, see Edie Joseph and Cyd Oppenheimer, J.D., "Impact on Early Care and Education of the Governor's Revised Budget for FY 15," Connecticut Voices for Children, (February 2014), available at: <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/ece14govbudgetfy15.pdf>.

¹¹ See email from Fred North at DCF to Alexandra Dufresne, October 29, 2013, forwarded to Edie Joseph and Kenneth Feder on March 10, 2014; see endnote 6.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ "Policy Brief - Early Care & Education Access for Maltreated Children in LA County," The Advancement Project, available at: <http://www.advancementprojectca.org/sites/default/files/imce/Policy%20Brief%20-%20ECE%20Access%20for%20Maltreated%20Children%20in%20LA%20County%20copy.pdf>

¹⁴ See, CGS 17a-16a.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Kenneth Feder and Tamara Kramer, J.D., "Raise the Grade: Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in State Care," Connecticut Voices for Children, (January 2014), available at: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/raise-grade-improving-educational-opportunities-children-state-care>.

¹⁷ See, CGS 17a-16a.

¹⁸ "Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care, Second Edition," The Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, (2008), available at:

http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/portals/0/dmx/2012%5C09%5Cfile_20120924_161919_eDinU_0.pdf.

¹⁹ See, for example, Diane Dodge and Toni Bickart, "How Curriculum Frameworks Respond to Developmental Stages: Birth through Age 8," Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting, University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana, available at:

<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/pubs/karzsym/dodge.pdf>

²⁰ See, for example, Rachel Schumacher and Elizabeth Hoffmann, "Continuity of Care: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale," Center for Law and Social Policy, (August 2008), available at:

<http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/13791.pdf>

²¹ See email from Fred North at DCF to Alexandra Dufresne, October 29, 2013, forwarded to Edie Joseph and Kenneth Feder on March 10, 2014; see endnote 6.

²² "Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care, Second Edition," The Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, (2008), available at:

http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/portals/0/dmx/2012%5C09%5Cfile_20120924_161919_eDinU_0.pdf.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ See, Compilation of U.S. Social Security Laws, Sec. 474 [42 U.S.C. 674] (a)(3)(B), available at:

http://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title04/0474.htm.

²⁵ "Dependent Child's Education Judicial Checklist," University of Washington School of Law Court Improvement Training Academy, available at: <http://www.uwcola.org/dependent-childs-quos-education-judicial-checklist.html>.

²⁶ Reynolds, Temple, Roberson, & Mann, Chicago Longitudinal Study, available at:

<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/icd/research/cls/publication.html>.

²⁷ See, "NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs," (July 2009), available at

<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/ProfPrepStandards09.pdf>

²⁸ See, Cost Models of Three Types of Early Care and Education/Child Care Centers in San Francisco: What is the True Cost of High Quality Care?," available at:

<file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/ejoseph/My%20Documents/Downloads/Cost%20Model%20of%20Quality%20Child%20Care%20in%20San%20Francisco%202010.pdf>

²⁹ See, "NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs," (July 2009), available at

<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/ProfPrepStandards09.pdf>

³⁰ See, W. Steven Barnett, "Low Wages = Low Quality: Solving the Real Preschool Teacher Crisis," National Institute for Early Education Research, (March 2003), available at: <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/3.pdf>.

³¹ See, "2011-2012 Average Starting Teacher Salaries by State," National Education Association, available at:

<http://www.nea.org/home/2011-2012-average-starting-teacher-salary.html>; see "Day Care Center Teacher Salaries in New Haven, CT, available at: <http://www1.salary.com/CT/New-Haven/Day-Care-Center-Teacher-salary.html>.

³² See, W. Steven Barnett, "Low Wages = Low Quality: Solving the Real Preschool Teacher Crisis," National Institute for Early Education Research, (March 2003), available at: <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/3.pdf>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Under PA 11-54, available at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2011/act/pa/2011PA-00054-R00SB-00927-PA.htm>, the publicly funded workforce must meet certain educational attainment benchmarks by 2015 and 2020. By 2015, 50% of head teachers must hold a bachelor's degree in an approved early childhood or related program, or a teaching certificate with an early childhood endorsement. All head teachers without a bachelor's degree must hold an associate's degree in the field. By 2002, all head teachers must hold a BA or teaching certification with an endorsement. Current teachers with Bas in non-related fields are grandfathered in and exempt from the requirements.

³⁵ Report on the Work of the Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council, CT Early Childhood Investment Initiative, (February 2009), available upon request.

³⁶ CHEFA Early Childhood Education Cost Estimate Tool, Public: School Readiness Sample Scenario, available at: <https://www.chefa.com/models/ccm/scenarios/samples/3>. Explanations for the scenario are available at: <https://www.chefa.com/models/ccm/scenarios/instructions>.

³⁷ See, "The State of Preschool 2012 – New Jersey," National Institute for Early Education Research, available at: http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/New%20Jersey_0.pdf. The program is offered in the poor urban districts initially identified by the N.J. Supreme Court in 1990 as having at least 40 percent of children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and five additional districts designated since by the legislature. All 3- and 4-year-old children within those districts are eligible to participate.

³⁸ For benchmarks of quality, see "The State of Preschool 2012."

³⁹ "The Challenge of Making Universal Prekindergarten A Reality in New York State," Citizen's Budget Commissions, (October 2013), available at: http://www.cbcny.org/sites/default/files/REPORT_UPK_10222013.pdf.

⁴⁰ Per Pupil Amounts for Current Spending of Public Elementary-Secondary School Systems, 2011 Annual Survey of School System Finances, available at: <http://www.census.gov/govs/school/>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Cost Models of Three Types of Early Care and Education/Child Care Centers in San Francisco: What is the True Cost of High Quality Care?, available at:

<file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/ejoseph/My%20Documents/Downloads/Cost%20Model%20of%20Quality%20Child%20Care%20in%20San%20Francisco%202010.pdf>

⁴³ School Readiness funding was designed as a three legged stool, including state School Readiness contribution, Care4Kids contribution, and a sliding scale parent fee. The average School Readiness parent fee is approximately \$1,250, and the Care4Kids contribution approximately \$850. Combined with a state contribution of \$9,000 (as this legislation proposes), the total equals \$11,100, which is still \$900 below the lowest projected cost of high-quality care.



Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance

**Testimony of Merrill Gay
Executive Director, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Before the Education Committee
March 12, 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 SB424 ***AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.***

As we have testified before, the Alliance strongly supports the goal of universal access to preschool. Currently the State Department of Education reports that 80% of children statewide have attended some preschool prior to kindergarten. Compare that to the just 56% of preschool age children in DCF care and custody who are attending preschool. This statistic is startling and demands attention. The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance strongly urges you to support SB424.

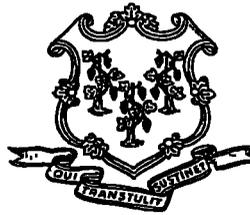
This bill will impact the 395 children ages three and four year old who were in such dangerous situations that DCF has removed them from their families. By last count, 220 of these children were not attending preschool. By all measures these are some of the most traumatized and most needy children in the state. As we move towards the goal of universal access to preschool, it is clear that this group of children should be moved to the front of the line. Providing these children with a consistent, high quality early childhood experience where they can enjoy caring relationships with their teachers and make friends with classmates can play an important part in their healing.

On a policy level it is very clear that requiring DCF to enroll children under their care in a high quality preschool program makes sense. On a practical level, however traumatized children present a set of behaviors and issues that can be extremely challenging for a preschool teacher. In order for this common sense approach to work, DCF will need to support both the children in their care, and the preschool staff working with them to ensure the best outcomes for the children. The child will not be helped, and may indeed suffer further trauma, if they are repeatedly moved from one preschool to another as the result of challenging behaviors beyond the capacity of the preschool staff. DCF should be prepared to work closely with preschool staff

supporting them with professional development and on going coaching in dealing with a child's individual issues.

SENATOR MARTIN M. LOONEY
MAJORITY LEADER

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Testimony before the Education Committee

In Support of Proposed Senate Bill 424: An Act Concerning Access to Preschool Programs for Children in the Care and Custody of the Department of Children and Families

March 12, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Proposed Senate Bill 424, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. With this critically important bill, Connecticut would become the first state in the nation to guarantee preschool admission and attendance to the children in our state who arguably need the benefits of preschool the most – our 3 to 5 year olds who, because they have been abused or neglected, have been removed from their homes and committed to the care of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Under the bill, only upon a documented finding by DCF that preschool attendance would not be in such a child's best interests will the child not be required to be enrolled into a high quality preschool program.

The benefits of a high quality preschool education to the children involved are by now well established. The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance recently pointed out several studies from across the nation that well illustrate these benefits. Chicago children who attended a preschool program were 29% more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who did not attend. Among those Chicago children, those that attended preschool were 41% less likely to require special education services. Maryland fifth graders who attended preschool were 44% less likely to have repeated a grade than their peers. Other studies have shown that these benefits carry on to adulthood, in profoundly significant ways. Chicago children who did not attend preschool were 70% more likely to be arrested for violent crime by age 18 than their peers that had attended. North Carolina children who attended preschool were less likely to become teen parents than their peers who did not attend. Forty year old adults in Michigan who had attended preschool were more likely to be employed, and had a 33% higher income than their peers who did not attend.¹

It is because of these kinds of life changing, real world benefits that preschool is such an amazingly sound investment for government to make in its citizenry. Investments in preschool education have been found to bring back a sevenfold return – every dollar invested leads to a benefit of \$7 to the body politic. One study, carried out over 40 years, showed an even greater

¹ "Benefits of Early Childhood Education", Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (2011).

benefit: for the approximately \$15,000 that was invested in each child for high quality preschool, the total monetary benefit back to society as a whole was over \$195,000, in the form of education savings, crime savings, welfare savings and increased tax revenues.²

When it comes to the young children who are the subject of Senate Bill 424 -- those who have been abused and neglected to the extent that they have been legally removed from their homes by DCF and taken into the custody and care of DCF and the State of Connecticut -- common sense dictates that these children would benefit even more than the average Connecticut child from attending a high quality preschool program. When one considers the unimaginable toll taken on these young children by the abuse and neglect that they have suffered, and that led to their entry into foster care, it becomes even more urgent that they receive the nurturing social and intellectual support that comes with attending a high quality preschool program. I strongly believe that these children need, and must be given, all the benefits we can provide for them. An indispensable part of nurturing these children is to get them enrolled into a high quality preschool program, immediately upon coming into DCF care, unless there's some unique, documented reason that such enrollment and attendance would not be in their best interests.

I look forward to working with the chairs and members of this committee on this piece of legislation that I believe could prove so beneficial to the several hundred children who are, at any given time, in the care and custody of DCF and the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

² "Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40, HighScope (2005)

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**TESTIMONY OF CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES, INC.
FOR THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

MARCH 12, 2014

**IN SUPPORT OF RAISED SB 424
AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS
FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

For the last 30 years, the attorneys in the Children at Risk Unit at Connecticut Legal Services (CLS) have represented low-income families and children. This testimony is being submitted by the members of the Child and Youth Advocacy Team (CYAT) in the Children at Risk Unit at CLS, who represent children who have been the victims of abuse and neglect. Our young clients in out-of-home placements are vulnerable in many ways. In our experience, having the consistency of a pre-school setting is helpful for their emotional growth as well as their behavioral and academic growth. In addition, studies show that preschool is fundamental for the healthy development of at risk children, particularly those who have experienced abuse and neglect:

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY STUDY: A 2013 study by Oregon State University researchers found that Head Start makes a positive impact in the lives of some of its highest risk children, both academically and behaviorally. The study, "School readiness in children living in non-parental care: Impacts of Head Start," published in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, Vol 34, pgs 28-37, sheds light on how Head Start helps children living in non-parental care (Summary at Oregon State University online publication, Synergies, <http://health.oregonstate.edu/synergies/2013/academic-gains-found-among-high-risk-kids-in-head-start/>). It has been shown that children in non-parental care show more problems with academics, behavior, and a wide variety of risk factors. The Oregon researchers wanted to know if Head Start, designed as a wrap-around program which links child, teacher, and parent, works for children who do not have a traditional family. Analyzing the data on 253 children in non-parental care, the Oregon researchers found that Head Start had positive impacts on school readiness, particularly in regards to early



academic skills, positive teacher-child relationships, and a reduction in behavior problems (<http://health.oregonstate.edu/synergies/2013/academic-gains-found-among-high-risk-kids-in-head-start/>).

CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS: In making the case for early childhood intervention, Casey Family Programs' Research Brief, released in October 2013, notes that positive child development occurs in the context of nurturing relationships. "Both the child's experience of maltreatment and changes in the primary caregiver are serious disruptions to healthy development. Such disruptions can alter the physical development of the brain and have serious negative consequences on children's cognitive, emotional and social development." (Making the Case for Early Childhood Intervention in Child Welfare, pg. 7, <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/EarlyChildhoodIntervention.pdf>). Therefore, effective child welfare-focused interventions targeted specifically to the needs of families with young children are essential for safe reduction of the foster care population and for preventing ongoing involvement of child welfare in families' lives (Pg. 3).

U.S. DEPT. OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES' CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION GATEWAY: In its publication on Supporting Brain Development in Traumatized Children and Youth, it is noted that "a growing body of evidence documents that functioning is affected when a child experiences trauma and the cognitive, physical emotional social health and developmental problems can result (Pg. 2, August 2011, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/braindevtrauma.cfm>). Factors which may increase a child's risk for developmental delays include: child maltreatment, particularly before age 3, parental substance abuse or mental health problems, family poverty or domestic violence, and involvement with a child welfare system (Pg. 3, citing Barth et al, 2007, Admin for Children and Families, 2007).

Most scientists agree healthy brain development requires positive relationships, rich learning opportunities and safe environments (Pg. 12, citing Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007). Head Start programs are early child care and education programs. Early care and education programs which offer rich learning environments and work to strengthen families can reduce the effects of an unfavorable home environment (Pg. 17, citing Stepleton, McIntosh & Corrington, 2010).

The physical and emotional distress which traumatized children experience may lead to both behavioral problems in school and poor academic performance. Also, potential developmental delays may worsen the situation as children fall behind their peers academically and have difficulty making social connections (Pg. 18). Head Start staff members, who are trained to know the stages of development and the warning signs for developmental delays, can work with

the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to identify concerns and connect these children to needed services.

For all of these reasons, Connecticut Legal Services, Inc. advocates for the provision of preschool for all of our young clients in DCF care. Generally, DCF is in agreement with such services and Head Start enrollment takes place without a problem. Occasionally, it can take weeks or months before we can get a preschool program in place. Having the requirements of Raised SB 424 in place will greatly assist in getting these young children into pre-school programs promptly. During the early years of development, every week is critical. All at-risk children, but particularly those who have experienced the trauma of being removed from their primary caregiver, should be afforded the opportunity to attend preschool to help counter the negative developmental consequences of their trauma. It is not only the right thing to do, but also, cost-benefit analyses have shown there is a stronger return on investments from strengthening families, supporting development and preventing maltreatment than there is from funding treatment programs later in life (Supporting Brain Development in Traumatized Children and Youth, pg.2, citing Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007).

Center for Children's Advocacy

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**TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY
TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF
SB 424, AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS
FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

March 12, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

We submit this testimony on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a nonprofit law firm that provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut through individual representation and systemic advocacy.

We strongly support **SB 424, An Act Concerning Access to Preschool Programs for Children in the Care and Custody of the Department of Children and Families**. This bill would require the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to enroll each preschool-aged child committed to its care in high quality preschool, unless enrollment is found to be not in the child's best interest.

SB 424 is essential to ensuring that Connecticut's most vulnerable children --- children committed to the state due to abuse or neglect --- have equal opportunity to learn, play, grow and thrive. SB 424 is also essential to the well-being of the state as a whole. High-quality preschool has one of the highest documented "returns on investment" of any known public policy intervention; returns on investment are particularly high for "at risk" and traumatized children, who often need early intervention to develop the social, emotional, and cognitive skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten. Finally, **SB 424** is essential as a matter of principle. The State of Connecticut is not just metaphorically or symbolically the "parent" of the children committed to its care; it is the *legal* parent, with a monopoly on the education decision-making rights of these children. This is a case where private actors *cannot*, by definition, step in to fill the gap: DCF is -- as statutory parent of these children -- the only entity with the legal authority to enroll its children in preschool.

How many—and what percentage of—preschool-aged children in DCF custody are not currently enrolled in preschool?

According to DCF, approximately 220 (56 percent of the total 395 preschool-aged children committed to DCF as of September 1, 2013) are not enrolled in preschool.¹ It is possible that in practice—at least in some regions of Connecticut—DCF enrolls more children in preschool than this data suggests; however, without a credible reporting system, we cannot know for sure. There is also currently no way to know whether the programs in which DCF enrolls its children are of high quality. **SB 424** seeks to remedy this by defining "eligible preschool programs" clearly and requiring DCF to document the child's enrollment (or the reasons why enrollment was not in the child's best interest) in each preschool-aged child's case plan.

Why is enrolling its children in high-quality preschool one of the most important duties DCF owes to the abused and neglected children in its care?

Extensive research shows that high-quality preschool is the single most cost-effective and important educational investment for children of all backgrounds.² However, preschool access is particularly critical for



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¹See October 29, 2013 email from Fred North at DCF to Alexandra Dufresne. "Preschool-aged" refers to children ages 3-5 who are not enrolled in kindergarten or first grade. "Enrolled in preschool" for purposes of these figures includes children in Head Start and in center-based care, which may include center-based care that would not meet the definition of "high-quality preschool" contemplated by this bill. These figures, however, may not include children served by home-based childcare settings. In addition, in this correspondence, Mr. North notes, "Please note that there is a large group of kids in placement within this age range for whom we do not have any school data entered. This may not be a fact of missing data, just that they are not presently attending any form of preschool program; but it is impossible to tell the degree to which that is true without a case review. I took a look at about a half-dozen of these cases and didn't find any that were actually attending any program, though a couple of them were receiving B-3 services in the home (but not at a center-based program)."

²Preschool attendance is the most important factor contributing to kindergarten readiness. Preschool attendance is especially important and can make the greatest difference for low income and at-risk children. There is typically a large gap in kindergarten readiness between children who attended a high-quality preschool and those that did not. Children who attend high-quality preschool programs are more likely to be academically and socially prepared for kindergarten, have lower retention rates, are less likely to need special education services, and have higher high school

abused and neglected children because of the effects of trauma on their social, emotional, and intellectual development. For this reason, there is consensus among early education experts that children in DCF care fall into the "highest priority" category of children who should be afforded high-quality preschool.

As early as third grade, abused and neglected children in DCF care have fallen behind their peers in educational achievement. For example, of the 58 third graders in foster care for whom valid 2013 CMT scores are available, 44 percent scored "below basic" on reading.³ The best way to inoculate abused and neglected children against educational failure is to ensure that they are enrolled in high-quality preschool. Indeed, 80 percent of all children in Connecticut enter kindergarten with preschool experience. (Rates range from 95.4 percent of children in DRG A districts to 67.4 percent of children in DRG I districts).⁴ To expect a child who has been abused and neglected to keep up with his peers—the majority of whom have had the benefit of preschool—without equal access to high-quality preschool flies in the face of recent data and research regarding the development of young children.

When a child is removed from her family and committed to the Department of Children and Families, the state becomes the *sole actor* with the legal authority to make educational decisions for the child. As the legal parent of the child, with a monopoly on educational decision-making rights, DCF has a special duty to ensure that the child's educational needs are met.

Are there enough high-quality preschool slots in Connecticut for the approximately 220 children who are not enrolled in preschool?

Likely yes. Statewide, approximately 22,000 young children with high-needs already have access to high-quality prekindergarten programs, according to Connecticut's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant 2013 application.⁵ Children who are involved with DCF are currently afforded first priority for Head Start slots. Last year, of the 8,956 Head Start slots in Connecticut, only 168 slots went to children committed to DCF, while another 418 families in Head Start were receiving some type of child abuse and neglect services.⁶ Although high-quality slots are in very high demand in some regions, it is unlikely that DCF—by enrolling its children in the magnet school lotteries and working with local school districts, Head Start, and private providers—could not find a place for its remaining 220 preschool-aged children.⁷ The Governor's proposal to provide high-quality preschool to almost all low-income children in Connecticut represents a wonderful—and ambitious—goal. Making sure that Connecticut ensures access to high-quality preschool for the relatively small number of preschool-aged children committed to its care is, in comparison, relatively easy to do.

graduation rates. See generally CYD OPPENHEIMER, TAMARA KRAMER & EDIE JOSEPH, CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN, CONNECTICUT EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PROGRESS REPORT, 2013 4 (2013), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/ece13progressreport.pdf>; DEBRA ACKERMAN & STEVEN BARNETT, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EARLY EDUCATION RESEARCH, PREPAREDNESS FOR KINDERGARTEN: WHAT DOES "READINESS" MEAN? 12 (2005), available at <http://nieer.org/resources/policyreports/report3.pdf>; MILAGROS NORES & STEVE BARNETT, THE ECONOMICS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS: LASTING BENEFITS AND LARGE RETURNS (Nat'l Inst. for Early Education Research ed., 2013), available at http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/Economics%20of%20ECE_Loyola_Nores.pdf (discussing the effects of preschool as seen in multiple studies across the nation).

³ See CMT and CAPT 2013 scores for children in DCF care, reported by the State Department of Education, on file with authors.

⁴ CYD OPPENHEIMER, TAMARA KRAMER & EDIE JOSEPH, CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN, CONNECTICUT EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PROGRESS REPORT, 2013 15 (2013), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/ece13progressreport.pdf>.

⁵ Dannel P. Malloy, Myra Jones-Taylor, Race to the Top Application for Initial Funding, Early Learning Challenge, (Fall 2013), p. 153

⁶ See October 2, 2013 email from Grace Whitney, Director, Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office, Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, to Alexandra Dufresne (citing Head Start Program Information Report for 2013). See also November 4, 2013 email from Fred North, DCF, to Alexandra Dufresne (stating that the percentage of committed children aged 4 in Head Start is less than 20 percent).

⁷ Early learning programs in Connecticut are already serving thousands of children with high-needs. See generally Connecticut Race to the Top Application, Early Learning Challenge 28–30 (2013), available at http://ctniror.dev.ctship.co/cms/assets/uploads/2011/12/Aconnecticut_rtt-elo_application.pdf. For specific data, please see the following chart:

Number of Children (Age 3 until Kindergarten Entry) with High-Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in Connecticut ⁷	
State Funded Preschool	8,913
Head Start	6,301
Funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, Section 619	4,666
Funded Under Title I of IDEA	3,714
Funded by State's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)	7,404
Family Resource Centers	3,028
Child Day Care Centers	2,481
Children's Trust Fund	1,203

How much would this bill cost?

If DCF were paying out-of-pocket for an additional 220 slots, the total cost would be approximately 1.83 million dollars (220 x \$8,346 per year per student, which represents the approximate cost per year of one year-round School Readiness slot).⁸ However, there are reasons to believe that state funded or federally funded preschool slots may already exist for some of these children. In addition, as noted above, it is possible that the data from DCF understate the number of committed children already enrolled in preschool. If so, this suggests that additional costs to the state may be less than the 1.83 million dollar figure.⁹

What are the expected short-term cost savings from funding this initiative?

Data regarding preschool experience before kindergarten and retention rates indicates that an increase in high-quality preschool education before kindergarten leads to lower kindergarten retention rates.¹⁰ The average cost to educate a student in kindergarten in Connecticut is approximately \$14,961,¹¹ while the cost to educate a student in preschool is only \$8,346 per year.¹² Therefore, every student that is not retained because he was prepared for kindergarten through a high-quality preschool program saves the state \$6,615.¹³ By ensuring that DCF committed children are enrolled in high-quality preschool programs, these children will begin school more prepared for the challenges of kindergarten and are less likely to be retained, thus saving the state money.

What are the expected long-term cost savings from funding this initiative?

Investments in early childhood education yield high returns and leading economists believe that every dollar invested in high-quality preschool education leads to seven dollars back to society.¹⁴ Studies have shown that when disadvantaged and at risk children receive high-quality preschool services, they are more likely to graduate high school, less likely to commit crimes, and make an average of \$5,500 more per year at age forty than their similarly situated peers who did not attend preschool.¹⁵ In one study over a forty year span, data shows that for the \$15,166 invested in each child for high-quality preschool, the total public benefit was \$195,621, taking into account education savings, taxes on earnings, welfare savings, and crime savings.¹⁶

⁸ See CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL READINESS OVERVIEW 2, available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Readiness/sroverview.pdf> (the cost of one year-around School Readiness slot is \$8,436). NEED TO CITE TO HIGHER PRIVATE MARKET SLOT FROM VOICES'S TESTIMONY?

⁹ Currently, some public school preschool programs provide transportation. According to the Connecticut Association of Foster Parents (CAFAP), it is the norm for foster parents of young children to transport the children to preschool.

¹⁰ In Connecticut's poorest districts (DRG I), the percentage of kindergarten students with preschool experience is the lowest in the state at 67.4%, while the retention rate is the highest in the state at 7.48%. In Connecticut's wealthiest districts (DRG A), the percentage of kindergarten students with preschool experience is the highest in the state at 95.4%, while the retention is the lowest in the state at 1.4%. CYD OPPENHEIMER, TAMARA KRAMER & EDIE JOSEPH, CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN, CONNECTICUT EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PROGRESS REPORT, 2013 15 (2013), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/ccel3progressreport.pdf>. DRG I includes Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury, and Windham. DRG A includes Darien, Easton, New Canaan, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Westport, Wilton, and District No. 9.

¹¹ See CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 2012-2013 NET CURRENT EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL (2013), available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/dgm/report1/basiccon.pdf>. This report listed the net current expenditures per pupil by school district. To arrive at this number, take the total net current expenditures per pupil (\$2,483,538) and divide it by 166 (the number of school districts included in the report).

¹² See CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL READINESS OVERVIEW 2, available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Readiness/sroverview.pdf> (the cost of one year-around School Readiness slot is \$8,436).

¹³ The cost to educate a retained child for two years of kindergarten is approximately \$29,922 (\$14,961 per year multiplied by two), while the cost to educate a child in high-quality preschool is \$8,436 and one year of kindergarten is \$14,961, for a total of \$23,307.

¹⁴ See ART ROLNICK & ROB GRUNEWALD, MINNEAPOLIS FEDERAL RESERVE BANK, EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT WITH A HIGH PUBLIC RETURN I (2003), available at http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications_papers/studies/earlychild/abo-part2.pdf; James E. Heckman et al., *The Rate of Return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program*, 94 J. PUB. ECON. 114 (2010), available at http://heckman.uchicago.edu/sites/heckman.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Heckman_ctnL2010_RateofRtn-to-Perry.pdf (analyzing the data from the Perry Preschool Project to determine a cost/benefit ratio).

¹⁵ See MILAGROS NORES & STEVE BARNETT, THE ECONOMICS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS: LASTING BENEFITS AND LARGE RETURNS (Nat'l Inst. for Early Education Research ed., 2013) available at http://nleer.org/sites/nleer/files/Economics%20oP%20ECE_Loyola_Nores.pdf (discussing the effects of preschool as seen in multiple studies across the nation); *Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40*, HIGHSCOPE (2005), <http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=219>.

¹⁶ *Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40*, HIGHSCOPE (2005), <http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=219>.

In light of the evidence above, we strongly support SB 424 with only minor, technical revisions. ¹⁷

Respectfully Submitted,

Alexandra Dufresne

Alexandra Dufresne, J.D.
Staff Attorney, Child Abuse Project

Sarah Gleason

Sarah Gleason
Law Student Intern

¹⁷ We respectfully suggest that Section 1(a)(2)(D), "a school readiness program that is part of a Head Start program" be changed to "a Head Start program " This is because all school readiness programs are already captured in Section 1(a)(2)(A) and because there exist some Head Start programs that are not part of school readiness programs. We also respectfully suggest that Section 1(a)(2)(B) be amended to include the phrase "or a regional educational service center" after the phrase "a local or regional board of education "

Testimony
Submitted to the Education Committee

March 12, 2014

S.B. No. 424 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Bye, Representative McCrory, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Deborah Richards and I serve as the Director of Student Services of the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). I am here testifying on behalf of our Executive Director, Dr. Bruce Douglas. CREC provides extensive educational support services throughout the state of Connecticut and operates six highly accomplished and specialized programs for students with disabilities and 19 successful interdistrict magnet schools in the greater Hartford area. We serve approximately 1,000 preschool children of which 10% are identified with disabilities.

I am testifying today on Senate Bill 424, An Act Concerning Access to Preschool Programs for Children in the Care and Custody of the Department of Children and Families.

Senate Bill 424 seeks to ensure that high quality preschool education is provided to the most vulnerable young children in our state, those children ages 3-5 who have been abused or neglected and are committed to the Department of Children and Families.

Extensive research shows that high-quality preschool is the single most important educational investment for children of all backgrounds. The first few years of life are critical for a child's cognitive and social emotional development. Evaluations of well-run prekindergarten programs have demonstrated that children enrolled in high-quality early learning experiences are less likely to drop out of school, repeat grades, need special education, and become incarcerated than children who do not have such opportunities. Preschool education is particularly critical for abused and neglected children due to the significant impact trauma has on their social emotional and intellectual development.

CREC has extensive experience providing services for children and youth who have experienced trauma. We cannot emphasize enough how critical a system of comprehensive intervention and support is for an abused or neglected child and their family or guardian. It is difficult to comprehend that the state agency charged with the care of this most vulnerable population does not have access to funds for this basic and universal need for these children. We know on both a cognitive and emotional level, the right thing to do is to ensure access to high-quality services for the most at-risk population of young children in our state.

We urge you to pass Senate Bill 424 to enhance our collective commitment to do what is right for these children and to positively impact their long term outcomes. These children need every opportunity we can provide.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our endorsement of this legislation and your commitment to the children and youth in our state.