

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

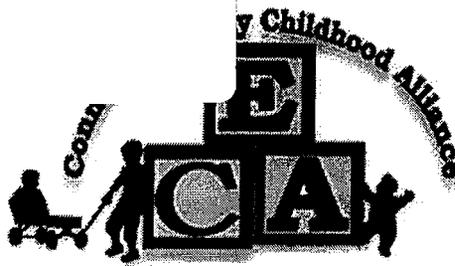
Merrill Gay

Date:

3/12/07

Bill Number:

7345



**Public Testimony**  
**Education Committee**  
**March 12, 2007**

Testimony in support of HB 7345 AN ACT CONCERNING GREAT SCHOOLS FOR ALL.

The CT Early Childhood Alliance supports this and any proposal to expand access to high quality preschool accommodating the 13,000 low income children across the state that are not currently served. As much as many of us would like to see all of those children in preschool right now, prior to slot expansion there are some real barriers to achieving that goal that must be addressed. Primary among them are facilities and a trained workforce. Both take time and a plan to develop.

This bill creates a scholarship program that will enable low income families access to affordable and quality preschool services. It has addressed several standards we support including :

- Supplemental payment for any special needs of a child and extended nontraditional hours
- Annual rate review process that assures reimbursement rates are maintained at levels which permit equal access to a variety of preschool settings
- Sliding reimbursements scale for participating families
- Waiting list.

Section 1. (d) requires preschools receiving school readiness funds to begin to collect data that can be used to assess the outcomes of children. This is beginning to address the real data issues that exist in the early childhood field. This combined with the new kindergarten assessment will give us data we need to study the impact of the school readiness program and hold the programs accountable. The Early Childhood Alliance endorsed the report of the Early Childhood Policy and Research Council and urges the committee to consider the recommendations of the report in regards to data development.

On behalf of the Early Childhood Alliance, I urge you to support thoughtful, planned expansion of the school readiness program. Adding 13,000 slots will almost triple the size of the school readiness program. In order to improve outcomes for young children it will take time, a plan and effective coordination.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Merrill Gay  
Co-Chair, CT Early Childhood Alliance