

# Connecticut Parent Power

A Network of Parents Impacting State Policy to Put Children First



## PUBLIC TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB #7345

### GREAT SCHOOLS FOR ALL

**Good Morning. I want to thank the co-chairs Senator Thomas Gaffey and Representative Andrew Fleischmann and other members of the Education Committee for hearing testimony in support of House Bill # 7345, and the expansion of high quality pre-school programs.**

**My name is Darlene O'Neal. I am parent from New Britain and a member of CT Parent Power. I have 4 children, a 7yr old son and triplet 5yr olds sons. My children had the privilege of attending a quality preschool. The school readiness program in New Britain taught my children to be ready for Kindergarten. I was very fortunate when it came time for my first son to be enrolled in preschool. I knew about the program and was able to sign him up early to avoid a waiting list. When it was time to enroll the triplets, once again I was fortunate that I was able to get them enrolled at the right time. Many other parents were put on waiting lists. I often wonder what I would have done if I had not known about these programs and think how unfair it is for parents to have to put their children's future on hold.**

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

*Darlene O'Neal*

Date:

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Bill Number:

*7345*

1-1234 • [ann@ctparentpower.org](mailto:ann@ctparentpower.org)

**It would be a great service if all parents of 3 and 4 year olds knew about and could enroll their children in quality programs without having to worry about waiting lists.**

**The triplets were in the school readiness program for 2 years when it came time to enroll them in kindergarten. I had to face separating them or keeping them together. I had a few choices, I could separate them but that would include having two 1/2 day in the morning and 1 half day in the afternoon or vice versa. I could also send them to different schools. I had one other choice and that was to keep them together. My choice was the later. I was fortunate in being able to talk to teachers, administrators and social workers to evaluate my children to see if they would thrive together. After a series of evaluations it was decided that they could go to kindergarten together. They were also evaluated in their preschool and chosen to take part in a specialized program in New Britain called Scholastic Academy. Scholastic Academy is a program that takes children from low income families that have a chance to become part of the gifted and talented program in 4th grade with a specialized program.**

**Because of high quality pre-school programs in New Britain, my kindergarteners are thriving and together. I urge members of this committee to support the expansion of quality pre-school programs put forth in House Bill # 7345.**