

Testimony before the Human Services Committee
2/13/07

My name is Susan Sponheimer. I am the COO of the Childcare Learning Centers in Stamford, CT. Childcare Learning Centers is the Head Start grantee for the Stamford Head Start/Early Head Start program. I would like to thank the members of this Committee for allowing me this opportunity to speak before you this morning. I am here to speak to Senate Bill 808, An Act Concerning State Grants for the Benefit of Head Start Facilities.

In the City of Stamford Head Start classrooms are located in community centers, churches, and Housing Authority buildings. Some of these sites have been renovated in the past few years but others have not been touched in over 30 years and are in need of renovation. Two of Stamford's Head Start sites are not handicapped accessible. At one site the drainage around the building is so poor that the classrooms flood after every heavy rainfall.

In the 2006 fiscal year the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services cut Head Start program grants by 1%. This cut has made it difficult for Head Start programs to provide comprehensive services to their families, let alone make improvements to the Head Start sites. In many instances Head Start programs have had to lay off staff in order to balance their budgets.

Head Start grants do not provide enough funding to cover the cost of building renovations. Head Start programs need to look to other sources of revenue to fund renovations such as making buildings handicapped accessible, improving the lighting or upgrading the heating and air conditioning systems.

A healthy preschool environment plays an important role in helping children acquire the necessary skills they need to succeed in school. State funding is necessary to ensure that all Head Start children attend school in facilities that are conducive to learning through play and experimentation. I am requesting that the members of this committee vote in favor of Senate Bill 808.

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