



Testimony by David G. Carter, Chancellor
Connecticut State University System

Before the
Committee on Education
Wednesday, February 28, 2007

Good afternoon, Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee. For the record, my name is David G. Carter, and I am Chancellor of the Connecticut State University System. I am here to support **Senate Bill 1114, *An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding Education*** and **Senate Bill 1282, *An Act Concerning Model Early Childhood Learning Programs***.

The record of this hearing should also reflect the support of the Presidents of the Connecticut State University System who were unable to be here today: President James Schmotter from Western Connecticut State University, President Jack Miller from Central Connecticut State University, President Cheryl Norton from Southern Connecticut State University and President Elsa Nunez from Eastern Connecticut State University.

At the outset, let me say that the benefits of early childhood education are convincing and compelling. The research shows that early intervention, and an unwavering commitment to a young child's progress, is absolutely vital if we are to enhance their prospects for progress and ultimately, academic success.

Therefore, I applaud the Governor's commitment to the PK-16 approach – as reflected in a significant commitment to the education continuum – from a phased-in expansion of universal pre-school to support for higher education's early childhood programs.

The Connecticut State University System offers Early Childhood Programs at all four of its Universities, and our commitment is longstanding. Building on that tradition, we continue to innovate, advance and intensify our efforts. Let me briefly share with you one example.

Southern's Early Childhood education program was selected last year by the State Department of Education to collaborate in the development of a statewide model pre-school in New Haven, at Leila Day Nursery School. As part of that program, Southern faculty will provide workshops and professional development programs for the pre-school teachers, student teachers from Southern will work at the school, and the university will organize observation days in New Haven for teachers from other pre-schools throughout the State. Southern will also organize professional development programs for Connecticut pre-school teachers. That's just one example of the many programs we have underway, and you will be hearing from representatives from Eastern and Southern

Connecticut State Universities later this afternoon about the initiatives at those institutions.

The Governor's Early Childhood Initiative is a significant step for Connecticut and a necessary investment in our state's future.

It would significantly increase the state's investment in preschool for 13,000 low-income children. Over the biennium \$11.1 million in FY2008 and \$30.5 million in FY2009 will be invested to subsidize about 4,100 preschool slots. As I mentioned at the outset, studies have shown that access to preschool education significantly increases a child's chances of success in school.

In order to increase the number of those entering the early childhood education field, the Governor is also proposing a series of education initiatives (\$1.1 million in FY 2008 and \$3 million in FY 2009) to develop distance learning opportunities, create a birth-to-five teaching credential, institute language and literacy requirements for assistant teachers, school readiness staff bonuses and loans and scholarships for early childhood education.

As many of you on the committee are aware, I have long favored a comprehensive approach, and this proposal certainly moves us forward.

I want to highlight the Governor's proposed scholarship program for students in early childhood education as well as the program for loan forgiveness for Connecticut residents who remain in the early childhood education field for three years upon graduation. This will not only help to attract students into the field of early childhood education, but will increase the likelihood that these individuals will remain in the field.

I also wholeheartedly support the expansion of the Connecticut minority teacher incentive program, administered by the Department of Higher Education to include early childhood education. Minority students in early childhood programs in their junior and/or senior year would receive a maximum grant of \$5,000 per year for up to two years and those students would be eligible for loan reimbursement up to a maximum of \$2,500 per year for up to four years of teaching or work service.

The proposal also establishes a collaborative of higher education institutions in Connecticut to maximize the potential of all of our institutions of higher education to offer quality early childhood education programs.

Together, these initiatives will serve to maximize the State's resources and help to provide a well-qualified, well-educated workforce to care for Connecticut's most valuable asset: our children. Thank you for this opportunity to share my comments and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.

Boosting Quality of Preschools

Wed., Dec 20, 2006

Southern Takes Lead in Boosting Quality of Preschools

Southern's Early Childhood Education program has been tapped as a partner for the creation of a statewide "model preschool" at the oldest childcare center in Connecticut.

The university was recently awarded a two-year, \$200,000 grant from the state Department of Education to serve as the program coordinator. It will work with Leila Day Nursery School in New Haven, which was founded in 1878.

The project includes several components. Southern faculty will provide workshops and professional development programs for the teachers at Leila Day, already recognized as a leader among preschools in Connecticut. The university will organize "observation days," when teachers from other schools throughout Connecticut will be invited to watch how Leila Day operates. Southern also will organize professional development programs for Connecticut preschool teachers. The grant will also be used to pay for materials and a program coordinator.

Student teachers from Southern will work at the school, while field placements in which Southern students observe and assist Leila Day teachers as part of their class work will continue.

Judith Buzzell, professor of education, says the grant is part of the state Department of Education's effort to strengthen the quality of state preschools and to make pre-kindergarten programs available to all children.

"There is a lot of research that says if a child participates in a highly qualified preschool program, he or she is successful in later schooling," Buzzell says. "That is why the state is increasing its emphasis on early childhood education. The model will combine the hands-on experience of the Leila Day teachers with the theoretical foundations offered by our faculty."

The state's Early Childhood Education Research and Policy Council has generated a proposal that would provide universal access to high quality pre-school for low-income families. It would also lengthen the daily programs for those children. The plan was recently presented to the state Board of Education and is being reviewed by Gov. M. Jodi Rell.

Gladys Deutsch, Leila Day director, says she is excited about the partnership with Southern. "Southern has the expertise to help educate the educators and to help us turn an already strong school with excellent teachers into a model for the rest of the state," Deutsch says.

She notes that the school enrolls about 100 children, of whom more than 60 are preschool age. It also includes after-school programs for students up to grade three. Deutsch adds that about a half dozen of the 20 or so teachers in the school are Southern alumni.

The project involves Deutsch, Buzzell and Beena Achhpal, an associate professor of education. "It's exciting and offers an opportunity for our faculty to work with preschool parents, who are also involved in making it a model school," Achhpal says.