

Testimony at Public Hearing
Wednesday, Feb. 28 at 12:30PM
Education Committee LOB, Rm 1D

My name is John Stamm; I am a retired psychology professor, with a specialty in developmental disabilities. My research with learning-disabled children has found: (1) the Developmental Lag of cognitive abilities increases during the school years, so that special education instruction, while helpful, becomes inadequate; (2) the effect of environmental stimulation on the growth of the brain's cognitive structures becomes greatly reduced after the age of five years, so that the age of 3 to 5 years is optimal for cognitive learning.

Many studies of shown that preschool education is effective and inexpensive. The 2002 study in Bridgeport found significant higher first-grade reading scores by children who had received preschool education, compared to the control group. Consequently, the reduced needs for grade retention and special education (\$622,644 & \$113,208) saved that school district \$509,436. This was only the initial savings. Preschool education has resulted in higher rates of high-school graduation and gainful employment, while the rates of delinquency and imprisonment were reduced. Most young prisoners have had little education and are resistant to participation in educational programs. The cost of keeping them incarcerated is tremendous. I support the governor's early education budget recommendations.

Connecticut still has 13,000 children, aged three-to-fours years, who are eligible for state-supported preschool (family income below 185% of federal poverty level), but do not receive this education. We can do better. The governor has proposed making 4000 new spaces available in the next 2 years to Erg I districts. If Erg I can not fill those spaces immediately, let's broaden eligibility to reach other children who qualify based on the family income guidelines. Section 16, of S.B. 1114 builds in flexibility by creating a scholarship program for eligible families to place their children in programs outside of their home district. What's important here is to get at risk children into programs as soon as possible.

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