



March 16, 2009

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**TESTIMONY REGARDING H. B. No. 6375 AN ACT CONCERNING  
REVIEW AND TERMINATION OF CERTAIN BOARDS AND  
COMMISSIONS; AND S.B. No. 839 AN ACT CONCERNING MERGERS AND  
CONSOLIDATIONS OF VARIOUS STATE AGENCIES**

Submitted to: The Government Administration and Elections Committee

By: Judith Meyers, Ph.D. – President and CEO, Child Health and Development  
Institute of Connecticut (CHDI) and the Children's Fund of Connecticut

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, and other members of the  
Government Administration and Elections Committee, as President of the Children's  
Fund of Connecticut and its subsidiary, the Child Health and Development Institute of  
Connecticut (CHDI), I am writing to you on behalf of the Children's Fund Public  
Policy Committee, a standing committee of our Board of Directors to ask that you  
reject the Governor's recommendations regarding termination of the Commission on  
Children, the Consolidation of the Children's Trust Fund within the Department of  
Children and Families, the Consolidation of the Office of the Child Advocate within  
the Office of the Attorney General, and the conversion of the Governor's own Early  
Care and Education Cabinet to an advisory council within the Department of  
Education.

The mission of the Children's Fund and CHDI is to promote primary and  
preventive health and mental health care for all children in Connecticut, with a  
particular focus on the underserved. Our Board Members include key state leaders in  
health care and members of the academic and business community who are  
committed to improving health and mental health outcomes for children in  
Connecticut. We work to develop and promote comprehensive, effective community-  
based health and mental health care systems through identifying, supporting, and  
disseminating evidence-based programs to address health and mental health needs of  
children.

We have invested significant dollars and organizational resources over the  
past ten years to work in close collaboration with state agencies and communities

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to address the health and mental health needs of underserved children in Connecticut. We have had close connections with all the entities I have mentioned and I have had the privilege of serving on the Governor's Cabinet for ECE as a legislative designee. We believe that much progress has been made in addressing the healthy development of children so that they are ready to succeed when they enter school and throughout their school years and beyond. We are very concerned that the dissolution of so many key state entities that are solely dedicated to children's issues will leave our state's youngest citizens with no voice to champion their causes. **The Children's Trust Fund, Commission on Children, Early Childhood Education Cabinet, and Office of the Child Advocate** all provide unique and vital services and advocacy on behalf of Connecticut's children

We understand that the current fiscal crisis demands optimal efficiency in government and in no way do we underestimate the enormity of the challenge being faced by the legislature as you work to balance the state's budget. However, plans to dissolve the aforementioned agencies will either demand creation of new structures to perform their functions, which could actually be more costly to the state and be less effective, or will shift their work into organizations that already face enormous workloads, thereby compromising attention to children's issues. Each of these organizations was created by either the legislature or the Executive Branch for a clear purpose. Those purposes have not gone away. Planning, policy development, preventing child abuse, promoting school readiness, providing oversight for the state's most vulnerable children – those needs persist and in difficult economic times, these needs will be on the increase. Undoing what has been built may provide some short term savings but they are minimal in light of the long term consequences. We understand there may be a need to scale back, but totally dismantling the infrastructure for each of these entities will set back years of reform. Connecticut has been seen as a leader on children's issues. Should the Governor's budget recommendations prevail, we are likely to move to the back of the pack.

The Children's Fund and CHDI will continue to devote our resources to work to address children's health and mental needs. We are prepared to continue to work in public/private partnerships with state agencies and are prepared to be helpful in any way we can. Please feel free to call on us as an independent entity for objective information, policy analysis, or other technical assistance that we might provide. We hope that this Committee will do its part in ensuring that Connecticut does not fail its youngest citizens, who are the state's future. Together we can assure the healthy growth and development of Connecticut's children.

Thank you.

Judith Meyers, Ph.D.

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