



New Opportunities, Inc.

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Good afternoon Ladies and Gentleman, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you regarding **House Bill 5841**, An Act Concerning Uniform Reporting for Preschool and Child Care Programs. **My name is Dona Ditrio and I am the Early Childhood Director for New Opportunities, Inc.**

Federally designated in 1964 as the anti-poverty agency for Waterbury and the 27 surrounding communities, New Opportunities, Inc., serves as the leader in operating quality, cost effective social service programs for low-income and elderly residents. All programs are operated based on Results Orientated Management Accountability.

New Opportunities, Inc. has a strong tradition of maintaining a stable, high quality workforce of people who give all their best to serve their customers. Individuals and families seeking services find qualified, culturally competent, friendly staff ready to assist them. Staff focus simultaneously on meeting short-term crisis needs of customers, while establishing relationships to work cooperatively in addressing long-term solutions. As the 4th largest employer in Waterbury, NOI plays a huge role in the community. Collaborations exist with companies, agencies and municipalities to provide services, develop policy and implement creative solutions that build relationships across race and class lines to end poverty.

New Opportunities, Inc provides over 500 families whose children are 6 weeks to 5 years old with a child care school readiness opportunity following the comprehensive education, health, dental, nutrition, mental and family services in the strength based Head Start model.

New Opportunities, Inc supports **House Bill 5841, An Act Concerning Uniform Reporting for Preschool and Child Care Programs** regarding elimination of duplication requirements in publicly funded early childhood programs.

The publicly funded State Head Start, DSS childcare and SDOE school readiness initiatives were admirable efforts building on existing systems, namely the federal Head Start program and the CT Department of Social Services childcare program both of which have their roots in the 60's.

Currently, New Opportunities, Inc as do other publicly funded early childhood programs report monthly demographics of family's medical home, income, birthdates, fees and Care 4 Kids subsidy payments and **actual attendance per day** to both the City School Readiness Coordinator and to the CT Department of Social Services as part of the monthly invoice system. **For school readiness, we provide the arrival and departure actual time for each day for each child.** This process is for recurring children and new children.



Now enters the newly launched Pre Kindergarten Identification System (PKIS), where at New Opportunities, Inc, as do other programs, we report name, birthdates, enrollment date, medical home, Care 4 Kids subsidy, free, reduced, or over income lunch and then the funding sources that pay for the child's actual space.

In addition, the federal Child and Adult Food Program report is completed where billing to SDOE is on the number of breakfast , lunches and snacks actually eaten by the children not the number prepared and served.

The first 2 weeks of every month are devoted to "building reports" to ensure integrity and appropriate assignment of services to funding. This effort takes approximately 120 hours each month.

Equally important to consider in deliberation of uniform reporting is requiring blended programs such as New Opportunities, Inc to be compliant with both the NAEYC accreditation criteria as well as the federal Head Start Performance Standards. The recent study by the CT Department of Education indicates that the Head Start Performance Standards at a minimum meet the NAEYC accreditation criteria at least 85% with Head Start requirements being far more encompassing in the areas of health, dental, mental health , disabilities, education , nutrition and family services. Both respected standards of quality requiring programs with blended opportunities for children and families to organize record keeping in accordance with 2 distinct systems thus more duplication of efforts .

A uniform reporting system will be more cost and time efficient with dollars currently spent on recordkeeping systems and report preparation reallocated to child and family services. New Opportunities, Inc encourages the passing of HS 5841.