

Testimony on Child Care Services and Employment in Connecticut

In response to the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan for Department of Social Services State Funded Centers

I would like to thank you on behalf of the State Funded Child Care Director's Forum for the opportunity to present testimony in response to the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan. I urge you to reject all cuts that will impact children. I would like to specifically address the \$3,907,275 reduction to the State Funded Centers and the \$530,870 immediate rescission.

The Department of Social Services currently provides funding for approximately 105 child care centers throughout the State of Connecticut. These centers provide early education and care to 4,789 children. A requirement to enroll a child into these programs is that parents or guardians must be working. A reduction of funding to these programs will put many of these programs out of business. The immediate impact will be that 4,789 parents and over 680 child care providers will be out of work adding to the existing skyrocketing unemployment figures and 4,789 children will no longer have an education based child care program preparing them for entering the public school system.

Ironically, while there is currently a summit being held in Washington to address the unemployment issues, Connecticut is proposing cuts to programs that will ultimately add to our State's unemployment rates.

The State Funded Centers, which have been in existence for over 40 years, have the same focus as the Department of Education's School Readiness programs – to prepare our children for kindergarten and to be lifetime learners. The State Funded programs have the added focus of ensuring families have the ability to work. They are NAEYC Accredited or in the process if they have recently opened new centers, have met the mandated staffing requirements and have worked in collaboration with Family Resource Centers, School Readiness Programs, and Head Start Programs to provide communities with the most appropriate settings available to families in the communities. In communities that do not have School Readiness Programs or Head Start Programs available to them, this is the only program available for families earning less than 75% of the State Median Income. I must also add that State Funded Programs are Connecticut's only guaranteed affordable quality infant/toddler provider for low and moderate income families.

We urge you to avoid balancing the budget on the backs of our children and keep all of our programs open so that children can obtain the education advantage they need to succeed and our families can continue to work in the State of Connecticut.