

CAHS

The Connecticut Association for Human Services
110 Bartholomew Avenue · Suite 4030
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
www.cahs.org

5841

Michael Rhode, President
James P. Horan Executive Director
860.951.2212 x 235
860.951.6511 fax

Testimony before the Human Services Committee
Regarding: Proposed H.B. No. 5841
AN ACT CONCERNING A UNIFORM REPORTING FORM FOR
PRESCHOOL AND CHILD CARE PROGRAMS
Submitted by Helene Figueroa, Deputy Director
Connecticut Association for Human Services
February 05, 2009

Bill No.5841 is sending you a message that the delivery of quality early care and education services has gotten way too complicated and simple steps could be taken to save the State some money. I also understand that as legislators, you struggle with two seemingly disparate policy goals. Get parents to work and Get kids ready for school success.

All we need to do is step back, take a deep breath, re-align a few policies and you can all be heroes! First a lesson in history...

The four major funding streams that provide the bulk of support for early care and education each grew out of differing compelling needs. They have their own standards, paperwork, idiosyncrasies and nuanced oversight procedures. Here are the four resources.

About 50 years ago, the State of Connecticut put out an RFP to human service agencies and established what we now call "State Funded Child Development Centers." Through direct contracts with DSS these fill the need for child care for low-income working families.

The Federal Head Start Program emerged a few years later to enrich the early childhood experiences of the poorest children in America. The idea was to give children a strong foundation for learning if they were to beat the odds and escape a cycle of poverty.

Care 4 Kids has been around for along time too. It is a child care subsidy program, funded by federal CCDBG and TANF dollars with a hefty supplement from the State. It provides parents with a voucher that they use to pay the child care provider of their choice.

In 1997, Connecticut passed landmark **School Readiness** legislation because there was undeniable research that linked later school and life success to the quality of life from birth through age five. SDE was tasked with developing a program to assist in readying children for school.

Over the years, arbitrary lines have been drawn across all these funding streams. The reality is that we all want the same thing. **Strong families that can meet the needs of their children regardless of income.** *Can we agree on that?*

Fast track to 2009. Each of these funding streams now targets the same demographic. Each of them provides services to families where one or both parents work. Each recognizes the need to weave together the warm fuzzy nurturing with an educational curriculum because that's what little kids need.

The fact is HIGH QUALITY early care and education gives you a two-for from a public policy standpoint.

So Please! Let's stop pitting one program against another and develop uniform expectations, standards, reimbursement rates, reporting, oversight, technical assistance, and on and on.

If we align early care and education into a true "system" instead of an outdated, out of step hodge podge of programs, we would be accomplishing a lot for today's economy by keeping parents employed and for Connecticut's future by ensuring that every child grows up healthy and ready to take on the world.