

**Office for Workforce Competitiveness  
Education Committee  
Testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 275  
March 1, 2010**

**The Office for Workforce Competitiveness supports without reservation Raised Bill 275.**

On behalf of the Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council, the Office for Workforce Competitiveness and the Department of Higher Education chaired the ECE Workforce Subcommittee from September 2007 through December 2008. The membership included 50 representatives from state agencies, employers, higher education, and other philanthropic and advocacy organizations.

The immediate charge to the Workforce Subcommittee was to develop a plan to increase the number and qualifications of the workforce in publicly funded school and center-based early childhood education (ECE) programs for 3- and 4-year-old children. This included public preschools, Head Start and School Readiness programs, and Department of Social Service child care centers. The objectives for this plan were outlined in the Research and Policy Council's Investment Plan (fall 2006) which made specific recommendations for increasing the minimum requirements for the staff in publicly-funded ECE programs and for expanding the number of children served by these programs. Therefore, the subcommittee was charged with recommending strategies that will:

1. Increase the qualifications of the staff at all levels (administrators, teachers and assistant teachers) to meet the new requirements.
2. Increase the number of qualified staff so as to meet the projected expansion.
3. Develop the infrastructure needed to support these changes in a coordinated manner.

In order to gather information from stakeholders across the state, the consultant and staff conducted 38 interviews, held 3 focus groups, and conducted a poll of the members. Using data from interviews, focus groups, and poll the subcommittee identified goals, objectives, and action steps for a workforce plan. However, in December 2007 the sub-committee was unable to support the plan because of concerns over the standard for teachers. The ECE Workforce Subcommittee came to the decision that the state law requiring 100% of teachers to have a bachelor's degree by 2015 was unrealistic and an analysis of the capacity of the higher education system has confirmed this judgment. The Subcommittee developed an Alternative ECE Workforce Proposal that calls for 50% of teachers to have a bachelor's degree and the remaining to have an associate's degree by 2015. In addition, all teachers will be required to have a new ECE teaching credential by 2015. The alternative proposal and a draft workforce plan were submitted to the ECE Cabinet for consideration.

The bill before you today is a result of the deliberations and hard work of members of the ECE Workforce Subcommittee and other early childhood education advocates.

**There are several reasons why we urge your support of this bill.**

**1) This bill raises the standard for teachers of young children in Connecticut.** Raised Bill 275 sets a standard which will result in raising the qualifications and competencies of early childhood teachers in state funded preschool programs by requiring teachers in these programs to have a college degree by 2015 AND will allow us to require that these individuals meet a competency-based standard set by a committee of Connecticut early childhood educators

(Standards Committee) and based on the published standards of the national early childhood professional organization (NAEYC).

By 2015 these teachers must hold an associate's or a bachelor's degree from an approved competency-based higher education program. A minimum of 50% of teachers in each program must have a bachelor's and the remaining teachers must have an associate's degree (50/50 requirement). Individuals graduating from these approved programs would also earn an Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC) as documentation of meeting this competency-based standard.

The Department of Higher Education has agreed to work with the Department of Education to establish a process for approving higher education programs that prepare teachers to meet the early childhood competencies established by the Standards Committee.

**2) The standard set in PA 05-245 is unachievable.** Public Act 05-245 requires School Readiness teachers to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree by 2015. Currently less than a third of these teachers hold a bachelor's degree.

In 2009 the Department of Higher Education conducted an analysis and determined that it would not be possible to meet the bachelor's by 2015 standard either by raising the qualifications of the current workforce or by preparing new bachelor's level early childhood teachers, or a combination of the two. The time required for students to complete bachelor's degrees makes the 2015 goal unattainable.

**3) Raised Bill 275 will allow us to set a high standard based on competencies by 2015.** By holding higher education institutions accountable to a competency-based standard we can ensure that graduates of both associates and bachelor's degree programs have the competencies required to teach young children.

The Departments of Higher Education and Education have committed to implementing a competency-based early childhood teacher credential (ECTC) which is tied to a higher education program approval process. This outcome or competency-based process actually provides better assurance of a highly qualified early childhood workforce than called for in Public Act 05-245.

**4) Raised Bill 275 reflects current research and national policies.** The 50/50 requirement (a minimum of 50% of teachers with bachelor's and all others with associates degrees) is the standard that has been set by the federal government for Head Start (by 2013) and by the professional organization (National Association for the Education of Young Children) for accreditation of programs for young children (by 2015).

There is a growing body of research on the competencies teachers need to be effective in early childhood classrooms (i.e., Pianta and Howes, 2009) and college degrees alone do not ensure that individuals have these competencies.

National experts, including Connecticut resident Lynn Kagan (Professor of Early Childhood and Family Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University) have called for a national early childhood credential. Connecticut's ECTC would establish a first in the nation model for such a credential.

For these reasons, we urge your support of Raised Bill 275 and look forward to supporting the Departments of Higher Education and Education in training the workforce of 2015..