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**Testimony before the Education Committee**

**Submitted by Sherry Linton**

**SB275: An Act Concerning Staff Qualifications for School Readiness Programs for 2015**

Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) would like to thank you, Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 275, an act that addresses the qualifications of School Readiness Programs. As we work toward having a quality early care and education experience accessible by all children, it is imperative that realistic options are created to enable the staff of early childhood programs to acquire the necessary credentials to offer quality services.

The current requirement to have an individual in each classroom of a program with a bachelors degree in early care and education or related field by 2015, creates very little flexibility for those who lack the degree but possess years of experience, and does not take into consideration the accessibility, or lack there of, for current staff to attain such degrees. The proposed legislation addresses both of these concerns by providing a Credentialing process that expedites as well as creates multiple pathways for early childhood professionals to advance their qualifications. The intent of this bill aims to directly address the need to increase the number of trained teachers in a classroom within a time frame that aligns with the standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Through the convening of early care and education providers, our organization can attest to the fact that Connecticut's early care and education community is committed to high quality standards as reflected by a highly qualified workforce. Therefore, it is incumbent on policy makers and those in higher education to create the pathways to ensure that those providers reach those desired goals. This bill affords that community such a reality that previously seemed unreachable.

For these reasons, CAHS supports SB275 which leads us in the direction of increasing the quality of early care and education being delivered to Connecticut's children.

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