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Good evening Senator Harp and Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Catherine Battista and I am the President of the CT Family Resource Center Alliance and Director of 2 Family Resource Centers in Meriden. Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. The CT Family Resource Alliance represents 62 sites throughout Connecticut. In December 1988, the CT State Legislature passed legislation allocating funding for the establishment and coordination of 3 demonstration FRCs. CT was the first state to initiate, fund, and demonstrate the feasibility of FRCs directly linked to the local public school system. Based on the School of the 21st Century concept as developed by Dr. Edward Zigler, Director of the Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy at Yale, the Family Resource Center concept envisions comprehensive, integrated, community-based systems of family support and child development services linked to public schools or located in public school buildings offered to families **regardless of race, ethnicity or socio-economic status**. Provide a single point of entry to programs and services and link schools, families and communities. Presently there are 1300 school-based sites across the nation with 21C programs referred to as FRCs in Kentucky and CT.

Dr. Zigler is a true visionary. He understood the importance of prevention.

Prevention, as we all know, is key to the success of a child. FRCs have been experts at prevention and intervention since 1988. Our mission is to prevent an array of childhood and adolescent problems by strengthening effective family management practices and establishing a continuum of childcare and support services for the optimal development of the child beginning at birth.

*Family Resource Center is a misnomer since we do not simply provide information: we provide direct services to families with children birth and up. We are all aware that there is a student achievement gap: I refer to it as a **family achievement gap**. As we strengthen the family, we strengthen the child and improve outcomes for success in school and in life.*

We offer childcare, parenting programs, family literacy initiatives, adult education, home visitation and child development screening with referrals to the CT Birth-3 system, home childcare provider support, school readiness support – anything that helps a family, we do. And if we can't help them we will find someone who can.

We do not duplicate services – we do, however, put it all together and connect the dots. We are culturally sensitive and intergenerational in our approach. **And the best part is we customize what we do according to the need of the individual school in an individual town. And the even better part is that we have the ability to leverage dollars to support schools so that they can better meet the instructional needs of the students.**

Example:

We once had child who screamed all the time and never left his mom's side. The mom and the pediatrician said he would outgrow that. We believed that the mom was in serious denial but let our certified parent educator administer a basic child-development screening which revealed he had deficits in 4 out of 5 categories. We called Birth- 3 and received services. He is a totally different child! That's an achievement gap we helped close before the child even started school! And this is happening in all 62 sites across the state .

Example:

Dad who came to our Raising Readers program with his son. He was too embarrassed to read as he was an immigrant from another country and was not confident that he could help his child. At the end of that program, he

gained confidence, took ESL classes and now reads to his child every night. Last year, he wrote a letter to our parent educator and read it to her thanking her for all her help. He cried as he read it (so did she) and said it was the first letter he had ever written in his life.

We have seen time and time again that as children in our programs get older, when they are ready to transition to kindergarten, it's a breeze for both parent and child!

Results-based accountability: The State is now piloting a results-based accountability system in 16 of our 62 sites that will **prove** what we do works.

Evaluation of FRCs was released in June, 2009 by The Yale Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy. It showed that FRCs work. The report is available online. Highlights of the evaluation:

There was an increase in parental knowledge and skills related to child development and behavior, which allows parents to prepare their children for school.

FRCs have accumulated so much knowledge of community and school services over the years that they not only link families with needed services but also assist school staff and various community-based agencies that depend on the FRCs' knowledge base and access to families.

Train more than 500 family child care and private providers leading to higher quality care for children in these facilities – which will certainly be even more crucial if we move toward changing the entry age for kindergarten. We are now training family daycare providers with CT's first Early Learning Guidelines whereby we can reach providers who are not center-based.

Provide intergenerational literacy programs and support the schools with the goal of **empowering parents to be their child's first teacher.**

Effectively respond to changes within their schools and communities that have occurred during the past 20-plus years.

While we're experts at leveraging funds, we are still operating below our usual funding level which forces us to serve less families, help less children. There are so many families to reach and I believe we're the ones who do it most efficiently and most effectively.

Children will always need support; families will always need help. Thank you for protecting that support and offering that help.

Catherine R. Battista