



Connecticut  
Early Childhood  
Alliance

Testimony of Ann Pratt, Executive Director, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance  
SB 930

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee,

I come before you today to express the concerns of early childhood advocates regarding SB 930.

Without substantial financial investments in early care and education, this proposal will have significant and cascading impacts on children, families and programs that provide early care and education.

We know from the statistics collected statewide that children in our poorest communities attend pre-school at a much lower rate than those in affluent communities. For example, in Bridgeport the rate of pre-school attendance is 65%. In Darien, it is 97%. What we have is a preparation gap that will only get wider if children must go another year without any educational programming.

Low-income families simply can't afford to access early childhood programs. The average cost per-year for a pre-schooler in a licensed child care center is over \$10,000. And while the state has a variety of programs to assist, there is a much higher demand and need than there are slots. In fact, the State Department of Education already estimates that about 6,000 children currently eligible for the School Readiness program (just one of our five major early care and education programs) are not being served because the program does not have the resources.

The estimates for this bill are that about 10,000 children will be impacted, a higher proportion of which will be low-income. Can we really allow more low-income children to suffer the loss of a year of educational instruction?

In addition, early childhood programs are unsure of their ability to absorb this number of children. The addition of 10,000 children to the early education rolls will necessitate more classrooms and credentialed teachers, both of which are in short supply.

In order to mitigate these negative outcomes, any action on this bill would require additional resources for our early care and education programs. We have 5 major programs, DSS State Funded Centers, School Readiness, Care4Kids, State Funded Head Start, and Family Resource Center, designed to improve the school readiness of our children. But, these programs are stretched to capacity, and are already working on shoe-string budgets.

I urge you to consider these impacts and the financial commitment necessary before you take action on this bill.