



**Testimony Supporting S.B. 1106:
An Act Concerning the Establishment of a
Department of Early Education and Child Development**
Karen Rainville, Executive Director
Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children
Education Committee
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Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

I am testifying today on behalf of the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children, the state early childhood membership association.

CAEYC *strongly supports* S.B. 1106, which would create a Department of Early Education and Child Development.

Early childhood programs in Connecticut for far too long have functioned despite the fragmented patchwork of programs and service, with disparate funding stream and duplicative reporting requirements. We feel that this bill is very ambitious, and would be a tremendous step toward developing a truly efficient, effective, and comprehensive early care and education system for children and families in this state. This bill includes many, if not all, of the fundamental elements of a cohesive system and we believe consolidating the programs and services listed in this bill, is imperative.

Is this an ambitious proposal? Without a doubt. Is it critical to ensuring that children in this state are successful and we are finally able to? Without a doubt. While the consolidation efforts this bill lays out are critical and the task is challenging, we have support to draw from moving forward. The BUILD Initiative, a national organization that studies and helps to develop state- and federal-level early care and education systems, has data and research on the features of successful early care and education systems to guide our work. We also have examples from states like Massachusetts who have successfully consolidated their early childhood program and services with great success.

As the work moves forward, we would recommend two key things:

First, a Commissioner of Early Education and Child Development is appointed by 2012 to lead the planning and development work of this department towards the 2014 goal.

Second, the planning and development process be transparent and inclusive of representation of the early care and education community.

Given the importance of high quality early care and education to the success of our children, our working families, and our economy, it is crucial that high quality ECE services are provided in an effective, efficient manner. The development of an integrated, efficient early care and education system is vital to both the short- and long-term success of Connecticut's children, families, and economy. S.B. 1106 proposes the component essential to the formation of such a system and we support its passage.