

Education Committee Public Hearing

February 28, 2011

Testimony submitted on Raised Bill No. 6432

By the Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education

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Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher and Representative Guiliano and members of the Committee. My name is Joan Barbuto, Co-chair of the Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education, a broad based coalition representing child development professionals, advocates, and parents. I am here today to speak in favor of Raised bill 6432 and also add some recommendations that the Coalition believes will strengthen the bill and assist in achieving its goal of reducing the achievement gap in Connecticut.

Our goal is to include in any reform efforts attention to child development, child safety and parenting education for all students, and community wide efforts to raise parental involvement and expectations to ensure each child achieves his or her potential.

Primary Prevention is the Answer:

The Task Force proposed in this bill should be directed to include in the plan a deliberate nexus regarding the K-12 education system and an understanding and commitment to supporting the critical role that parents and communities play in the care and education of the young children. We believe the Task Force must encourage integration of existing programs, services and funding streams into a flexible and comprehensive birth to eight years of age system of supports for children and families.

Rationale for Focus on Early Childhood

The Cabinet Report, Ready by Five: Fine by Nine, defines the problem as not so much an achievement gap, but a **preparation gap**. Well documented research demonstrates that the achievement gap is caused by inequities related to poverty, prejudice, culture, medical care, early childhood care, disability, parenting variables, teacher variables and school quality variables. The Achievement gap is the nomenclature for all of these factors, all must be addressed. Raising Achievement scores are directly related to:

- Pre-natal and early care
- Importance parent places on education
- Level of parent involvement in education
- Child health and exposure to multi-sensory experiences
- Child abuse history

- Parenting skills
- Fathering and co-parenting skills

Recommendations:

- The bill should include language directing the plan to include a coordinated birth through eight years of age vision that focuses on child and youth development. The state has invested millions of dollars in programs serving children and youth and the plan should “connect the dots” and encourage cross sector planning and results based accountability for outcomes. This should be done with the Early Childhood Cabinet and the Youth Policy Council, both of which have existing plans and cross sector councils.
- Section 1 of the bill should define membership and include experts in child and youth development, parents, and broad stakeholders from the community, including School Readiness Councils. (Note: the Governor’s budget leverages private dollars for early childhood system building)
- Section 2 (a) of the bill should include a member of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the Commission on Children.
- Section 3 of the bill should include the development of curriculum on child development for middle and high school children as well as reading and math.
- Section 4 of the bill should include language that delineates how and what needs to be reported to ensure it is based on student outcomes and not “inputs” such as so many teachers training days or so many parent meetings. Reports should be based on results based accountability methodology and include population goals, indicators and strategies based on best practice and science.
- New Section: direct the Task Force and Interagency Council to work with school districts in implementing the recommendations and funding should be directed to implementation. The bill is currently silent on this issue.
- Require school districts to work with community stakeholders to improve parenting support and parenting skills in a coordinated system.

The Coalition appreciates the opportunity to share its recommendations with you and looks forward to working with you to ensure all students have opportunities for success.