

Testimony to Higher Education Committee

Senate Bill 927

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and Committee Members, I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony. I am Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives at the EASTCONN Regional Educational Service Center. EASTCONN is the grantee for Head Start and Early Head Start for Windham and Tolland Counties. I also serve as staff to the Northeast School Readiness Council representing Killingly, Plainfield and Putnam.

I am **opposed to the proposed changes in legislation that would lower the requirements for teachers in school readiness funded programs**. Data provided by the CT Department of Education indicate that the teacher qualifications have consistently increased since 2008, which may in part be due to the statutory change requiring BA level degrees.

Fiscal Year	AA	BA	Masters	Combined BA and Higher
2008 Priority and Competitive		25%	10%	35%
2010 Priority and Competitive	27%	31%	15%	46%
2011 Priority and Competitive	44%	38%	16%	54%
2011 Priority Only		36%	14%	50%
2011 Competitive Only		48%	25%	73%

These statistics indicate that teacher qualifications are already over the 50% level for bachelor's degrees and close to the 50% of attainment of an associate degree. **Of potential concern is the discrepancy of qualifications between priority school districts (50% BA or higher) and competitive grant communities (73% BA or higher)**. We should continue to encourage the attainment of BA degrees to work to ensure that highly qualified teachers are teaching our children who are most potentially at risk, closing the preparation gap and prevent the conditions that led to Sheff v O'Neill.

As a Head Start grantee and consistent with program policies of over 12 school readiness councils in northeastern CT a bachelor's degree in early childhood education has been the

minimum qualification for ten years. This criterion was established due to the review of research on child outcome and achievement data, despite lower requirements for both Head Start on the federal level and the school readiness grant program.

In research conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research, *The Impact of Teacher Education on Outcomes in Center-Based Early Childhood Education Programs: A Meta-analysis* (Kelley and Camilli, 2007) the findings indicated that effects on quality outcomes from teachers with a bachelor's degree were significantly different from those teachers with less education. <http://nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=185>

Additionally the findings are supported in *A Matter of Degrees: Preparing Teachers for the Preschool Classrooms* (Bueno, Darling-Hammond and Gonzalez, Pew Center on the States, March 2010)

“Research suggests that a critical element of pre-k quality is well prepared and educated teachers. Specifically, when teachers have both bachelor’s degrees and specialized training in early childhood, students demonstrate the best gains in all developmental areas: social, emotional, early literacy and math and language skills.”
http://www.preknow.org/documents/teacherquality_march2010.pdf

Connecticut should continue to promote high quality preschool programs for all children, most especially for those that may be at risk for future school success and for those programs that receive state funds.

I am not able to attend the hearing. If you have additional questions, please contact me. easchenbrenner@eastconn.org or 860-455-0707. Thank you for the consideration.