



Select Committee on Children
February 22, 2011
Testimony of Jessy Burton, Save the Children
Supporting SB 983 with Amendments

Thank you Chairwoman Urban and committee members for allowing me to testify today in support of the effort to improve our state's preparedness for children in disasters. My name is Jessy Burton, I am a resident of Hartford and am an Emergency Preparedness Project Manager for the international organization Save the Children. Save the Children is the leading independent organization creating lasting change for children in need. Our worldwide operations, including hundreds of employees, are headquartered in Westport. We are deeply concerned about the welfare of the children in our home state and are proud of a unique disaster preparedness partnership with several state agencies—we hope it becomes a model for the whole country. However more needs to be done, and in several critical areas, Connecticut is failing to meet minimum criteria for protecting our children. These areas need a legislative solution. I am here today to urge you to pass the amendments to SB 983 and then support quick passage of this legislation as a critical step to protecting the most vulnerable citizens in our state.

Working with Commissioner Boynton and his staff at the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, funds were designated from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to create a partnership between Save the Children and the Departments of Social Services, Public Health, and Emergency Management and Homeland Security to address the gaps in disaster planning for young children in Connecticut. This initiative is creating a state emergency plan and system to ensure that child care providers are properly linked to state emergency personnel—it is unique in the country.

However at the same time, Connecticut still does not meet three out of four criteria we use to grade states in our annual Report Card on Protecting Children During Disasters. I am submitting to you the states scoring page from that report as well as more information on the four criteria.

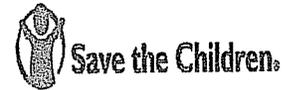
Far from being a leader, our state is behind a majority of states. This situation should not be acceptable, particularly since the remedies are common-sense and either no-cost or low-cost. Further, these remedies have been enacted in other states with little or no opposition. The most vulnerable Connecticut children in the most vulnerable settings are made more vulnerable because these measures are not in place. While I can not speak for other agencies or individuals as to their positions on this bill, I can assure you that state agencies and emergency responders are eager to partner in meeting these standards—but we need you to pass the legislation.

To keep my testimony brief, I will not go in detail on each of our criteria. However in quick summary, the goal is to support the work of state agencies, responders, day cares, and schools by providing adequate mandatory common standards. These standards must require every school and licensed daycare or childcare setting to have a written multi-hazard disaster plan that includes steps for off-site evacuation/relocation, reunification of children with their families, and specific steps for all children with special needs. Connecticut is not completely lacking in these areas, and in fact one of the strengths of this bill is the ability to use existing enforcement, training, and other in-place resources to easily implement the new requirements. However currently there are varying standards

for different classifications of licenses, combined with other holes, leaving the state short of the needed standards. In the case of schools, a minimal policy is in place but we seek to strengthen it so it is better used in-practice.

In closing, I would like to once again urge you to pass the amendments to SB 983 and then work for quick passage and enactment of the bill. I would also like to publicly thank state officials who have worked collaboratively to meet the needs of our children when the next emergency strikes in Connecticut. If the quality of our unique partnership is combined with the steps in this legislation, Connecticut will be the national leader in protecting children in disasters. Save the Children would like nothing better for our home state, and our children deserve it.

Thank you again for your time and the opportunity to testify today. If you have questions, I am happy to either answer them now or respond back to the committee in writing.



2010 National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters Criteria

This document provides analysis of the definitions and applications of the four minimum standards for emergency preparedness in Save the Children's National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters. Many states have policies in place that relate to disaster preparedness. Whether these policies meet the Report Card's standards depends upon their content and application.

In the Report Card, a state is not judged to meet a particular standard unless (1) the substance of the state's policy meets the minimum requirements of the standard; (2) the policy is mandated; and (3) all licensed or regulated child care—or in the case of the 4th criteria—all K-12 schools are subjected to the policy. Substantive descriptions of the standards are listed below. A rule is considered mandated if it is (1) in statute (2) in regulation or (3) is provided by the relevant agency as mandatory guidance. Mandatory guidance includes forms, templates, and technical assistance that are provided to all licensed or regulated child care facilities and are required to be completed or implemented.

The final requirement is that all license or regulated child care—and all K-12 schools in regard to the 4th criteria: An Evacuation Plan for Schools—be implicated by these requirements. Many states not receiving credit have policies in place but do not make those policies applicable to all facilities. For example, a state might have a full multi-hazard written plan requirement but apply it only to center-based child care, excluding homecare facilities. Despite having a regulation in place, the state would not receive credit for the first criteria: A Plan for Evacuating Children in Child Care.

Criteria 1: A Plan for Evacuating Children in Child Care

The state must require all licensed or regulated child care facilities to have a written multi-hazard plan for evacuating and safely moving children to an alternate relocation site. A multi-hazard plan must cover manmade and natural emergencies and address evacuation, shelter-in-place, and lock-down situations. A state may have more than one classification for licensed or regulated child care, but the standard must apply to all facilities equally.

Criteria 2: Reunifying Families after a Disaster

The state must require all licensed or regulated child care facilities to have a written plan for emergency notification of parents and reunification of families following an emergency. Again, a state may have more than one classification for licensed or regulated child care, but the standard must apply to all facilities equally.

	1 Evacuation/ Relocation Plan	2 Reunification Efforts	3 Special Needs Of Children In Child Care	4 K-12 Written Procedure For Disaster Planning
ALABAMA	o	o	o	o
ARKANSAS	o	o	o	o
CALIFORNIA	o	o	o	o
HAWAII	o	o	o	o
MARYLAND	o	o	o	o
MASSACHUSETTS	o	o	o	o
MISSISSIPPI	o	o	o	o
NEW HAMPSHIRE	o	o	o	o
NEW MEXICO	o	o	o	o
VERMONT	o	o	o	o
WASHINGTON*	o	o	o	o
WISCONSIN*	o	o	o	o
DELAWARE	o	o	o	o
D OF COLUMBIA	o	o	o	o
NEW YORK	o	o	o	o
NORTH CAROLINA	o	o	o	o
OHIO	o	o	o	o
OKLAHOMA	o	o	o	o
PENNSYLVANIA	o	o	o	o
SOUTH CAROLINA*	o	o	o	o
TENNESSEE	o	o	o	o
TEXAS*	o	o	o	o
UTAH	o	o	o	o
WEST VIRGINIA	o	o	o	o
ALASKA	o	o	o	o
COLORADO	o	o	o	o
FLORIDA	o	o	o	o
MINNESOTA	o	o	o	o
RHODE ISLAND	o	o	o	o
VIRGINIA	o	o	o	o
ARIZONA	o	o	o	o
→ CONNECTICUT	o	o	o	o
GEORGIA	o	o	o	o
ILLINOIS	o	o	o	o
INDIANA	o	o	o	o
KENTUCKY	o	o	o	o
LOUISIANA*	o	o	o	o
MAINE	o	o	o	o
NEBRASKA	o	o	o	o
NEVADA	o	o	o	o
NEW JERSEY	o	o	o	o
NORTH DAKOTA	o	o	o	o
OREGON	o	o	o	o
SOUTH DAKOTA	o	o	o	o
IDAHO	o	o	o	o
IOWA	o	o	o	o
KANSAS	o	o	o	o
MICHIGAN	o	o	o	o
MISSOURI	o	o	o	o
MONTANA	o	o	o	o
WYOMING	o	o	o	o

Research was conducted by Brown Buckley Tucker and reflects action in relevant state administrative offices and state legislatures as of July 15, 2010. The asterisk* signifies that regulations are under revision and a draft of the proposed regulations was reviewed and met criteria.