



State of Connecticut
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February 22, 2011

Select Committee on Children
Testimony for Raised Bill 983
An Act Concerning Children Affected By Disaster And Terrorism.

Dear Representative Urban, Senator Musto, and members of the Select Committee on Children:

My name is Representative Betty Boukus, and I am here to testify in support of Raised bill 983, An Act Concerning Children Affected by Disaster or Terrorism.

Though people might have thought our state was far removed from issues stemming from issues of disasters or terrorism, I believe the past few weeks of severe weather conditions and the result of these conditions require us to face disaster issues that affect our children now, most recently the 10 daycare centers across out state in which had to close for various reasons relating to the storms.

In unnatural disasters such as in Middletown and East Hartford, lockdowns and evacuations in our schools our children unfortunately our experiencing first hand the effects of unanticipated violence.

Natural disasters have caused floods and tornadoes here. And this year our relentless snow and ice buildup have led to rooftops collapsing and buildings being evacuated.

In Plainville, one child care center that the community utilized for sixty families, hard-working families, was forced to close. The roof caved in on the church and the child care program was in the basement. This was a NAEYC-accredited, excellent center.

Children were scattered throughout Plainville. Many families had no child care and this impacted their going to work. There was no state plan for how to protect the child care center and the families preference for this program in a natural disaster.

Children did not get to see their peers. Parents missed work as they could not afford the scattered and more expensive child care options. It seemed we were going to have to start over with a new build location requires new licensing which would takes several months. No child had time for that, nor did any working parent!

We can help our families and our children with an intentional evacuation plan to address multiple kinds of disasters. This bill offers the components that have been researched throughout the states by Save the Children as necessary for a quality and fast response to children.

1. Pay attention to special needs children,
2. Detail evacuation plans and locations for multiple types of hazards
3. Provide information to parents so they know how to find and contact their children
4. Ensure family reunification after evacuation with detailed planning in advance of the crisis.

This information is key for both childcare and schools. Helping children thrive while parents work is of paramount importance to our quality of life and economy.

Connecticut was the first state to write a law about children and terrorism. We now need to be one of the first states addressing child care and education planning in the face of natural and unnatural disaster.

I would recommend the few amended changes offered by the Commission on Children today. In particular, this plan should not be a separate plan from the regular plan of the state emergency management and homeland security disaster plan. That way we do not fragment but integrate children with the adults into a plan that links to federal requirements and federal resources.

Just a post note, I had an excellent meeting with representatives from Public Health, Public Safety and Homeland Security, Commission on Children, representatives from Save the Children and CT Charts-A-Course. They are all working for a new location for our 3 to 8 year olds.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty Boukus". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Elizabeth "Betty" Boukus
State Representative, 22nd