

Appropriations Committee

Public Hearing, February 21, 2012

Testimony Submitted by Edie Reichard -- Sleeping Giant Day Care, Inc.

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Governor's Education Budget, HB No. 5014 An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Edie Reichard and I am the Director of Sleeping Giant Day Care, Inc. in Hamden; Secretary of the State Funded Child Care Center Director's Forum representing the 102 early care and education child care centers in CT; and the State Funded Child Care Center Representative on the Early Childhood Education Cabinet (formerly the SAC).

I am writing this testimony **in support of the proposed Education budget related to child care services**, and appreciate funding for the 102 network of quality child care centers in 53 municipalities in Connecticut, serving over 4300 children, including 1200 infant and toddlers. Since 1968, Connecticut has made a sustained investment in quality child care for low to moderate income working families (CT Statute 8-210b). The Centers form an integral component of the early care and education system. We believe wholeheartedly in high standards for staff and programs and are currently mandated to acquire NAEYC accreditation and our staff must meet standards set by the School Readiness Law.

Sleeping Giant Day Care, Inc. in Hamden has been in partnership with the Town of Hamden since 1979. With the help of the Town, which provides the space for our center, we have been able to serve thousands of children over the past 33 years and keep their parents or guardians employed. We provide a quality education for the children we serve and the parents know their children are in a safe and loving environment.

As part of the 2012-2013 biennial budget, the state funded child care centers were moved from the oversight of the Department of Social Services to the State Department of Education, charged with developing a coordinated system of early care and education, integrating child care centers with the School Readiness Program. We have worked diligently with SDE over the past few months and continue to work on a set of recommendations that will establish a seamless program serving children from birth to age eight targeted for 2014.

The early care and education system requires support and funding for professional development to ensure teachers obtain mandated credentials. To that end, we support the increase in **quality enhancement dollars for professional development and career advancement**.

**Additionally, we ask that a priority for the allocation of the funds go for those programs mandated to achieve NAEYC accreditation and staffing qualifications.** These standards are the foundation of Connecticut's proposed TQRIS system envisioned in the Governor's Education legislation, SB 24, Section 35 and quality enhancement dollars are necessary for teachers serving infants, toddlers, and three and four years olds to comply with program and staffing mandates.

In summary, the Centers appreciate Governor Malloy's investment in early care and education and we urge the Appropriations Committee to support these budget recommendations. Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.