



Connecticut Association for Human Services
110 Bartholomew Avenue · Suite 4030
Connecticut 06106
www.cahs.org

Luis Caban, President
James P. Horan, Executive Director
Hartford, 860.951.2212
860.951.6511 fax

Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Assistant Policy Director
Connecticut Association for Human Services
RE: Governor's Proposed Budget, State Department of Education
Thursday, February 21, 2013

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jillian Gilchrest and I am the Assistant Policy Director for the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS).

Founded in 1910, CAHS promotes family economic security strategies that empower low-income working families to achieve financial independence. CAHS also hosts the Providers' Caucus, a forum for childcare providers in family based and center based childcare settings, both publicly and privately funded, to receive information about statewide policy happenings and programming, and learn and share best practices amongst childcare providers statewide. With a membership of more than 300 childcare providers and growing, the Providers' Caucus listserv is reaching a diversity of childcare providers statewide.

CAHS is also a member of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide membership and advocacy organization committed to improving the developmental outcomes for all children, birth to 8, in the areas of early learning, health, safety and economic security and the Hartford Area Childcare Collaborative.

I am here to testify on the Governor's budget concerning early childhood programs and services. The Governor's plan maintains funding for core programs, such as School Readiness, Child Day Care, and State Funded Head Start while increasing funding for Community Plans for Early Childhood, Improving Early Literacy and Parent Trust Fund. But, his plan does propose complete elimination of Even Start and After School funding which we oppose.

Even Start gives families access to the training and support they need to create a literate home environment and to enhance the academic achievement of their children and After School programming provides a safe and secure after-school haven for children of working families. Eliminating funding for both seems to go against all other school reform efforts that are happening in the State.



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The Governor's budget also includes new funding for an Office of Early Childhood, which creates one place for the coordination and delivery of early childhood services. By coordinating in one agency, the state will be able to identify gaps in services and make informed policy decisions. The Graustein Memorial Fund has offered to match up to \$1 million over two years to support the new Office of Early Childhood creating a nice partnership between the state, philanthropy and communities.

The current delivery of early childhood services is fragmented over many agencies, making it confusing for parents and inefficient for service providers. The new Office of Early Childhood will move early childhood programs from 5 State agencies into the new Office in order to simplify the process of ensuring that all programs and services are of the highest quality and families have information and access to these services. New funding will be used to support the transition, continued planning as the new office is implemented, and to support the private/public partnership.

CAHS supports the creation of an Office of Early Childhood and asks that the Appropriations Committee do the same. Thank you for your consideration.