

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

Thursday February 21, 2013

Testimony Regarding Funding for the new Office of Early Childhood (OEC)

Co-chairs are Rep. Toni Walker and Sen. Toni Harp and other members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Mary Burnham and I am the Co-Chair of the State Funded Directors Forum. I have worked in the field of early childhood for over 35 years.

I am in support of the new Office Early Childhood (OEC) and the start up funds this Office will require in order to be successful.

The OEC will coordinate publicly funded programs serving children birth to five and their families. We applaud the vision and effort the Governor and staff directed to crafting this historic new Office of Early Childhood, bringing together diverse programs including child care, school readiness, home visitation services, birth to three services and functions of licensing for child care businesses. This plan is the result of study and outreach to parents, teachers, programs, and administrators by The Early Childhood Planning Team lead by Myra Jones-Taylor.

Representatives of the State Funded Child Care Centers have served on several work groups charged with developing the framework, mission and goals of the new Office and believe the new Office holds out hope for a more integrated seamless system to serve children and families.

Today there are 102 State Funded Centers located in 53 municipalities, staffed by 1800 qualified teachers, serving 4,300 children including 1200 infants and toddlers. Established over forty years ago pursuant to CGA8-210, the Centers provide affordable, quality child care for low and moderate income working families. State Funded centers are an integral component of the child care business sector in Connecticut and we appreciate the Legislature's commitment to funding and sustainability of our services.

For the past several years, Centers worked with the State Department of Education to better coordinate child care services with Connecticut's School Readiness Program. Focusing on common elements to both programs including requirements for NAEYC accreditation and staffing requirements, we have fashioned a stronger consolidated system. At the same time, we have urged state officials to recognize our uniqueness and maintain the integrity of our original mission to provide quality, affordable child care for working families. This new OEC will maintain support for state funded child care centers and our role in the early childhood system.

In order for the OEC to be successful, start-up funding is imperative and in the long run the Office will create efficiencies and economies.

The NEW funding for the Office of Early Childhood is:

FY 14: \$774,747

FY15: \$935,839

In addition, the Graustein Memorial Fund has a match offer of up to \$1 million over two years to support the new Office of Early Childhood for the following purposes:

§ Support state agency managers with the new transition and adjustment through technical assistance and training

§ Support continued planning as the new office is implemented

§ Support a private/public partnership through creation of a nonprofit entity

The leveraged funds would support a partnership between the state, philanthropy and communities.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary E. Burnham

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