Connecticut Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

February 20, 2013

Testimony for Appropriations Committee in favor of Governor's Bill No. 6359

Submitted by: Carol Schofield, Director of Special Initiatives, Connecticut Council for Philanthropy on behalf of the Connecticut Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

To summarize:

- This minimal expenditure will leverage private sector funding and have a major impact on children and their families in Connecticut.
- All young children and families in Connecticut will benefit from creation of the Office of Early Childhood.
- The current system of service and program delivery for early childhood is diffuse, very difficult for families to understand and enter, and inefficient for providers.
- Research overwhelmingly shows that investing in early childhood reaps enormous benefits financial and otherwise not only for children and families, but also for the state.
- The Office as presented in the bill is the result of local and national research, interviews (including conversations with nearly 3,000 parents), and collaboration. It will position Connecticut as a leader in early childhood.
- I encourage you approve and applaud Governor's Bill No. 6359.

The Connecticut Early Childhood Funders Collaborative was formed two years ago with the overall intention of supporting the State in meeting the requirements of Public Act 11-181, which as you know, calls for a coordinated system of early care and education in Connecticut by June 30, 2013. At that time the 14 members of the Collaborative were excited about the promise of the legislation. As foundations with a long-standing interest in early childhood issues across the state, we realized the time had finally come to create a comprehensive system for early childhood in Connecticut.

Over the past two years, Collaborative members, working in partnership with the state expended $45,000 to support Connecticut's Race To The Top/Early Learning Challenge; participated directly in the recruitment and hiring process for the State's Early Childhood Planning Director, Myra Jones-Taylor; and contributed financially to help support her position.

American Savings Foundation

Children's Fund of Connecticut

The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

Community Foundation of Greater New Britain

Connecticut Community Foundation

Connecticut Network of Community Foundations

Fairfield County Community Foundation

The Fund for Greater Hartford

William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund

The Grossman Family Foundation

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

Liberty Bank Foundation

Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut

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Finally, in close consultation with the Early Childhood Planning Team and the Governor's Director of Policy, we contracted with the BUILD Initiative, a respected national source of analysis in early care and education, to contribute a third-party perspective on Connecticut's unique opportunities and challenges in the early care arena, as well as observations about what's working well in other states' early childhood systems. This study was undertaken specifically to supplement the efforts of the Planning Team. At the Planning Team's request, the Collaborative also supported additional one-on-one technical assistance to the team and additional information gathering.

All that is to say that we are invested both financially and intellectually in the proposed Office of Early Childhood. And we will continue that investment as the act is implemented.

We believe Governor's Bill No. 6359 creating the Office of Early Childhood in Connecticut will result in a coordinated system of programs and policies that promote and support optimal growth and development of children and families in Connecticut.