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**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Governor’s H.B. 6359 – An Act Concerning An Early Childhood System
Submitted by Linda J. Kelly, President
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Thursday, February 21, 2013**

Good afternoon, Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Linda J. Kelly, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (Hartford Foundation). As the community foundation for the 29-town greater Hartford region, the Hartford Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all residents of the region. For more than two decades, the Foundation has invested significantly in early childhood through its *Brighter Futures Initiative* and its support to the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative. Our new strategic plan, *Accelerate Success*, builds upon the deep knowledge and experience gained across our early childhood, K-12 education and workforce initiatives to advance systemic solutions and new partnerships that improve outcomes for children and their families.

The Hartford Foundation strongly supports the Governor’s H.B. 6359 – An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System. This bill creates an Office of Early Childhood, reporting directly to the Governor, and brings together early childhood services and programs from five state agencies: the state Departments of Education, Social Services, Public Health, Developmental Services, and the Board of Regents. The Hartford Foundation commends the Governor for his commitment to early childhood and vision to create a high-quality, comprehensive, and coordinated system of early childhood services. As a community foundation, we value the conceptual vision embodied in the Governor’s proposed Office of Early Childhood that values the child in the context of the family and community. In addition, we thank the Governor for his leadership and support of public-private partnerships throughout the planning process leading to H.B. 6359.

The Hartford Foundation also commends the State Legislature for its vision in P.A. 11-181 that was the catalyst for the planning that led to the Governor’s proposal for a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated early childhood system. We recognize the work of Myra Jones-Taylor, the Early Childhood Planning Director, and her team, who have worked tirelessly to listen directly to families and providers, philanthropy and other stakeholders across the state and synthesized best practice research and implementation from other states to inform the Governor’s proposal.

The Governor’s plan to create a distinct Office of Early Childhood that houses the coordination and delivery of early childhood services focuses attention on building the foundation for the healthy development of Connecticut’s young children and future workforce. With an Executive Director who reports directly to the Governor, the Office of Early Childhood embodies leadership in transforming the current delivery of early childhood services from a fragmented array of programs and funding streams over many agencies to an integrated, cost-effective and coordinated system. H.B. 6359 is a means to improve the lives and outcomes of children in the earliest years. The Hartford Foundation urges the Education Committee to support this bill.

Thank you.