



Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Re: Governor's Budget Proposal – Commission on Children
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Executive Director
Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Tuesday, February 19, 2013**

The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance thanks the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's budget proposal to consolidate the legislative commissions. I am Maggie Adair, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children, birth to age eight, in the areas of early learning, health, safety, and economic security.

The Governor proposes to consolidate the five legislative commissions into one Commission on Citizen Advocacy. While we support consolidations and creating efficiencies when they make sense, this plan would render the legislative commissions inoperable with only one person working for each constituency.

The Alliance, in particular, wants to call attention to the ground-breaking work and achievements of the Commission on Children. The Commission's work and partnership has led to far-reaching policies for children and parents, including early care and education, home visitation, grade-level reading, child obesity, youth employment, and parent engagement.

The Commission on Children is a leader in parent engagement, creating one of the most successful parent leadership curriculum and training models in the United States. Thousands of parents have participated in the Parent Leadership Training Institute, which gave them the opportunity to build their skills and voice to become community leaders. PLTI and other parent engagement programs are funded by the state through the Parent Trust Fund, which receives match dollars from the Graustein Memorial Fund.

The Commission on Children has a long history with early reading policy. In the 2012 legislative session, the Commission worked with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus to research and draft policy on grade-level reading for inclusion in the education reform package. The work won the Grade Level Reading Pacesetter Award as the model state, awarded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Commission on Children was also instrumental in securing a large grant from the Grossman Family Foundation to fund a K-Grade 3 reading assessment pilot.

In recent years, the Commission on Children, like the other legislative commissions, has weathered staff cuts and budget reductions. Due to being cut by more than half, the staff work on a furlough basis, yet this barebones staff continues to work passionately and effectively on behalf of children.

The Commission on Children is a good deal for the state of Connecticut. It has a long history of partnering with local and national foundations to bring additional dollars to programming that will benefit children and families. Over the past two years, the Commission has raised \$1,513,200 in external dollars to support community programs. For each dollar invested in its budget, the Commission on Children has brought in more than \$1.45 from federal, foundation, and private sources over the past two years.

That's a great deal. The Alliance urges the Appropriations Committee to keep such a great deal in place.