



A L L O U R K I N INC.

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

Testimony Supporting H.B. 6359, An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System
Offered by All Our Kin, Inc.
February 15, 2013

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Stillman and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Dana Holahan, and I am testifying on behalf of All Our Kin, a nationally-recognized, Connecticut-based nonprofit that trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. Through our programs, child care professionals succeed as business owners; working parents find stable, high-quality care for their children; and children, the workforce of tomorrow, gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and beyond.

I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 6359, which will create an Office of Early Childhood that will coordinate early childhood programs and services, promoting better outcomes for our state's youngest children and their parents.

At All Our Kin, we see firsthand the struggles that families face as they search for affordable, accessible, quality child care options. Parents report that the current system is confusing and overwhelming; they tell us that they do not know where to go to get the information that they need, and that they become discouraged and exhausted in their attempts to navigate the current, fragmented system.

We also see the need for a unified system for providers, specifically family child care providers. Too often, family child care providers are forgotten or left out of professional development opportunities and funding streams that can raise the quality of their work. Family child care providers already play a crucial role in our state as caregivers of Connecticut's youngest and most vulnerable children. The majority of infants and toddlers are cared for in home-based child care settings, and children with socioeconomic risk factors are most likely to be in home-based child care arrangements. Family child care programs are essential to meeting the need for infant and toddler care, as well as the need for affordable, second- and third- shift, and culturally-based care.

At All Our Kin, we have demonstrated that with sufficient investment, incentives, and support, family child care programs can meet high levels of quality. However, for providers to meet the levels of quality that all Connecticut's children deserve, we must create an early childhood system in which they are included as full participants, a system that incentivizes and supports their quality while also holding them accountable for meeting high standards.

We applaud the state of Connecticut for recognizing the need for an early childhood system. We believe that the proposed Office of Early Childhood is the most effective mechanism for creating a system that is comprehensive, streamlined, and transparent, one that ensures quality in all child care settings and provides information and access for all Connecticut's families. Thank you for your consideration.