

Testimony before the Education Committee
Submitted by David Nee
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
February 15, 2013

Good morning, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is David Nee, Executive Director of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund.

I am here today to offer support as you bring into being an improved system of early care in Connecticut, based on a long history of partnership with state government and with communities involving parents, providers, school and municipal officials through the Discovery initiative. We understand the power of public-private partnerships and the power of co-designing efforts to bring us closer to the day that “Connecticut children of all races and income levels are ready for school by age five and successful learners by age nine.”

The amount of funding I will discuss today is the tip of an iceberg. Thanks to you and our legislative partnerships, local philanthropies - including two community foundations and eleven United Ways as well as numerous private foundations - are investing more than ever before in developing local early childhood systems. By June 30, 2013, thanks to our mutual investment funding, forty Connecticut communities with the biggest economic and academic challenges will have created local blueprints for their children from birth to age eight.

There is tremendous momentum in this state, in our communities and in the nation as a whole toward building an early childhood system that truly works for children, parents and communities. Less than two years ago, you passed Public Act 11-181, calling for the development of such a system. In response, the philanthropic community in Connecticut formed the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, thanks to the leadership of Nancy Roberts at the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, and invested \$180,000 to support the planning process.

I am here today to offer funding on behalf of the Graustein Memorial Fund both to continue our traditional partnerships and join you in a new enterprise. Recognizing the importance of Public Act 11-181 and the good work of Dr. Myra Jones-Taylor and the Planning Team, our Trustees have authorized a special appropriation of \$1 million over the next two years to support building an effective early childhood system. The Memorial Fund will match State investments in these areas:

- \$200,000 to support capacity building of State agency staff who will influence and make decisions in early care and education in the new agency.

- \$200,000 to support further planning and systems building, assuming that not all the planning work could be reasonably finished by June 30, 2013.
- Up to \$600,000 on a matching basis for core operating support of a public/private partnership to help align state and local early childhood systems.

These are investments in collaboration, capacity building and structure to ensure better outcomes for children. Long term sustainability of local early childhood systems depends on local public and political will. State policy and structure need to align to local blueprints, aspirations and outcomes for children. The State structure must mirror and support local actions.

Partnership is intentional, not accidental. It takes hard work. This work will require close consultation with State agencies, philanthropic groups and communities. The Memorial Fund fully embraces the idea that the design for what happens needs to be a co-design among us all. Therefore, we will continue to support, a total of \$75,000 over two years for the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative through the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, created by fourteen funders to support the aims of Public Act 11-181. The Collaborative's resources helped underwrite the State's application for the Federal Early Learning Challenge grant, and brought to the Planning Team technical assistance of the highest quality, through the National BUILD Initiative, which exists precisely to help states bring early childhood systems into being.

In bringing all this good news, the Memorial Fund also offers continued support of the existing partnerships with you for local early childhood system planning and implementation, for parent leadership development and for early literacy. This includes over \$3 million from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, \$200,000 from the Children's Fund of Connecticut and \$300,000 from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. I will optimistically anticipate that the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative will come up with \$250,000 over the next two years, a proposed total of \$3.8 million from the private side that seeks \$2.5 million in public funds. I have been told that the state funds are in the Governor's budget.

Public Act 11-181 lifted us all, public private state and local to a new higher level of thinking and aspirations for early childhood. I congratulate the General Assembly for their foresight expressed through that bill. I also congratulate the Governor's team who have so well executed your intentions, as I understand them.

Let's get real. Structures don't raise children, families and communities do. We all had help in raising our families. Communities and families need support to give help to families in need. The proposed structure, the Office of Early Childhood, and the associated public/private partnerships, are already being acclaimed by some knowledgeable observers as having the potential to be the best vehicle for aligning state and local systems in the United States.

I believe with all my heart that this is the strongest next step we can take on behalf of children in Connecticut. I am the grandfather of three children ages six and under. Were they in Connecticut, Brady age 4 and Connor age two, would be children who will benefit. They happen to live in Montgomery County Maryland which has universal pre-school. I want for all children in Connecticut what my grandchildren have. I hope you have similar aspirations and that you share the desire to see all our children flourish.

Thank you.

David Nee
Executive Director
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund

Breakdown of Public/Private Funds

I. Continuing Investments

		Memorial Fund	Other Philanthropic	State Proposed	Total
Community Base Grants	2013	\$1,130,000	\$0	\$600,000	\$1,730,000
	2014	\$857,000	\$0	\$600,000	\$1,457,000
Health Match (Children Fund of Connecticut)	2013	\$100,000	\$100,000	0	\$200,000
	2014	\$100,000	\$100,000	0	\$200,000
Parent Trust Fund*	2013	\$250,000	\$0	\$500,000	\$750,000
	2014	\$250,000	\$0	\$500,000	\$750,000
Early Literacy**	2013	\$175,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$475,000
	2014	\$175,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$475,000
Early Childhood Funders Collaborative***	2013	\$50,000	\$125,000	n/a	\$175,000
	2014	\$25,000	\$125,000	n/a	\$150,000
Total		\$3,112,000	\$750,000	\$2,500,000	\$6,362,000
Current State Investments				\$2,200,000	
Net Increase in community grants				\$300,000	

*The Memorial Fund provides dollar for dollar match above the state's 2007 base of \$250,000.

**Annie E. Casey Foundation has committed for two more years.

***Fourteen foundations are collaborating to build a system for early childhood. Talks about future support are just beginning; this figure is a straight-line extrapolation.

II. New Resources for Connecticut Early Childhood System Building

		Memorial Fund	Other Philanthropic	State Proposed	Total
Build State Capacity (especially middle managers)	2013	\$100,000	unknown	\$100,000	\$200,000
	2014	\$100,000	unknown	\$100,000	\$200,000
Planning Consultants	2013	\$100,000	unknown	\$100,000	\$200,000
	2014	\$100,000	unknown	\$100,000	\$200,000
Public/Private Partnership Support	2013	\$300,000	unknown	\$300,000	\$600,000
	2014	\$300,000	unknown	\$300,000	\$600,000
Total		\$1,000,000	unknown	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000