



Where the future is present.

Testimony in Support of H.B. 6359  
Submitted to  
Education Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly

Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto  
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Co-Chairs Senator Andrea Stillman and Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Vice-Chairs Senator Beth Bye and Representative Douglas McCrory, Ranking Members Senator Toni Boucher and and Rep. Tim Ackert, and distinguished members of the Education Committee.

My name is Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools.

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to testify in support House Bill No. 6359, “An Act Concerning An Early Childhood System”, and for your ongoing support of Hartford Public Schools. Our success over the years is due in great part to the hard work of the members of this committee.

Second, I want to publicly thank Gov. Dannel Malloy and Commissioner Stefan Pryor for their bold leadership on school reform and commitment to deliver a quality education to every child in Connecticut, as evidenced by House Bill 6359.

This measure creates an Office of Early Childhood, with an executive director accountable to the governor, which will manage and coordinate a broad assortment of programs presently scattered across five departments – the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Public Health, the Board of Regents and the Department of Developmental Services.

More significantly, the bill establishes a positive Early Childhood experience as a state priority, recognizing that such an experience is essential to developing productive citizens. The new agency’s primary mission will be to ensure a smooth, healthy and safe transition to a regular school setting for children under the age of five. It will accomplish this mission by setting high, uniform standards of service that eliminate much of the confusion that parents experience in steering their way through the current childcare system.

I was most impressed by a provision in the bill that requires the Office of Early Childhood to establish a competitive grant program for non-profit agencies and school boards that clearly demonstrate they can “move the needle” of school readiness. The continued work that we must engage in to increase literacy levels in our city hinges on a collective effort across sectors and agencies.



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As an educator, a mother and as Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, I am thrilled.

If House Bill 6359 is signed into law, the Office of Early Childhood will provide a welcome complement to one of my administration's key initiatives, The Third Grade Promise – which proposes to have every child reading a grade level by third grade.

Research shows that a child reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade can transition from learning to read to reading to learn a variety of subject matters that are part of the fourth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Therefore, that child has a significantly greater likelihood of graduating high school and having a successful college career.

But our task is often made difficult by the disparities in the early childhood options available to parents and the levels of preparedness that these options produce. House Bill 6359 will go a long way toward correcting those disparities and making it easier for Connecticut to close the achievement gap.

We need to be willing to question and change our ways of practice and leverage our capacity across organizations on behalf of students. That's what you have in House Bill No. 6359 and I urge you to approve it.

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