

Testimony before the Education Committee  
Governor's Bill 6359 - An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System  
Testimony by Geraldo Reyes Jr.  
Mayors Office City of Waterbury  
Friday, February 15, 2013

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Governor's Bill 6359, An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System.

I am Geraldo Reyes Jr., a resident of Waterbury who currently works for the City of Waterbury with the Mayor's office and team within our Education Department, which serves over 18,700+ students and parents, whom fully support the Governor's Bill 6359. The issues are many with our children and youth in our statewide communities, but we must focus on building PreK-12 school systems that give all children an early start in reaching optimal levels of success, especially as children move into their formative years – critical to the future of our State to cultivate productive citizens who in turn give back to their communities.

Waterbury parents would like to take a moment to commend the legislature for their shared vision in passing Public Act 11-181, which was instrumental in moving forward a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated early childhood system that is child and parent centered. For too long, we have had a fragmented early care and education system that has made it complex for parents to access services in a timely fashion – which has caused them to lose hope in finding the appropriate preventive services desperately needed, which has our children falling between the cracks...

For the past year, we have worked closely with significant partners like Connecticut Parent Power, School Readiness – Bridge to Success, and our Waterbury Family Resource Center teams to include the voices of our parents through the collection of surveys, stories and Parent Forums dialogues. Once the Planning Director Team came on board under Myra Jones-Taylor, Connecticut Parent Power ensured that we were kept informed on all progress regarding building an early childhood system. We commend this teamwork by Marilyn Calderon, Executive Director of CTPP and Ms. Jones-Taylor and her team of dedicated leaders to children for making this process an inclusive one with parents, providers and teachers – whom are usually forgotten.

We commend the Governor's office for investing in this bold priority, early is good, but earlier is better! It has been a pleasure witnessing the small, but meaningful strides that Connecticut has made in the past nine months in really shaping an early childhood system that reflects reality for all diverse children and their families. As a concerned parent of two young ladies that were raised in the City of Waterbury with access to quality care and education opportunities...

I realize the more I learn about this consolidation that it is way overdue...because presently it is a fragmented early childhood structure that may not be adequate enough to best shape the optimal level of success for all children in the future. I believe that all children deserve great beginning that have lasting outcomes that prevent future challenges.

I fully support the requirements during the youngest years of a child's life, which gives us stronger returns in their future (socially, emotionally, physically and academically). HB 6359 is a smart and cost effective move that will ultimately focus the attention necessary to our most vulnerable, our youngest children.

In closing, we applaud you for ensuring that parents and children are taken into account with every decision you make in the establishment and implementation of this new early childhood office.

By amplifying the voices of local parents and statewide communities, each of you has opened their hearts to greater hopes and dreams for beginnings that shape stronger middle and ends that foster promising results in their near future – embracing a cradle to college mentality.

Through this process, we have shared successes that have helped make this system's build reflective of shaping informed decisions to create transparent pathways that promote better developmental outcomes for all diverse children that may otherwise go unknown.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and we look forward to your support in passing HB 6359.

**Geraldo Reyes Jr.**

Mayors Office  
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