



Good morning, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Jeffrey Trawick-Smith. I hold the Phyllis Waite Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University's Center for Early Childhood Education. As you know, Eastern falls under the governance of the Board of Regents for Higher Education and is a part of the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities. I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Board of Regents in support of House Bill 6359, *An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System*. This bill would create a new Office of Early Childhood, which would coordinate, under one authority, the many services for young children that are currently provided by separate state agencies.

This consolidation would enhance the already-outstanding work of the many dedicated and knowledgeable professionals who now provide services to children and families within these existing agencies. Such an office would ensure that there is continuous and meaningful communication among those engaged in supporting the development of young children and their families. Decision-making on new initiatives or resource allocation would be more collaborative, multidisciplinary, and eventually based on an integrated data base on child outcomes, program quality, and workforce competence and professional development needs. Lastly, services would more likely be grounded in a uniform and clearly articulated theory of growth and change that would ensure a seamless educational experience for children from birth through age five.

Research findings confirm that this integration of services for young children is a worthwhile endeavor. Some of the very best longitudinal studies in early childhood development and education suggest that communication and coordination across professionals, a common set of adopted outcomes, and a coherent theoretical framework are among the best predictors we have of whether an early educational program will lead to positive child outcomes. The proposed Office of Early Childhood would allow such an integrated approach to meeting the needs of young children and their families.

Let me share what this bill means to those of us working under the Board of Regents, and at the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, who prepare caregivers and teachers of young children. The proposed Office of Early Childhood would provide us with clear guidance on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for our students to assume positions within the entire early childhood system, birth to age five. It would help us to define for our students the elements that comprise high quality care and education in the state and the role that graduates of our programs might play in providing that quality to all children. This office would provide invaluable data to us on the need for professionals in the early childhood workforce in the state—particularly data from the registry system of Connecticut-Charts-a-Course. Such data will

be especially important as our university and others develop a birth to age five non-certification program that leads to the state's new Early Childhood Teaching Credential.

In summary, we are extremely excited about the possibilities for collaboration with this proposed new Office of Early Childhood. We would eagerly offer any assistance our center could provide to this office, if created, and would hope to become active partners with its staff in pursuit of the highest quality care and education for young children in our state.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.