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Education Committee
Governor's Bill No. 6359, An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System
Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Assist Policy Director
Connecticut Association for Human Services
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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.

Founded in 1910, CAHS promotes family economic security strategies that empower low-income working families to achieve financial independence. CAHS is also a member of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide membership and advocacy organization committed to improving the developmental outcomes for all children, birth to 8, in the areas of early learning, health, safety and economic security.

CAHS also hosts the Providers' Caucus, a forum for childcare providers in family based and center based childcare settings, both publicly and privately funded, to receive information about statewide policy happenings and programming, and learn and share best practices amongst childcare providers statewide. With a membership of more than 300 childcare providers and growing, the Providers' Caucus listserv is reaching a diversity of childcare providers statewide.

CAHS would like to applaud the Legislature for their vision in Public Act 11-181, which was instrumental and led to the proposal before you today, to create an Office of Early Childhood. We would also like to praise the many individuals, organizations, providers and parents who have worked with Myra Jones-Taylor, the state's Early Childhood Planner, in order to produce this plan for an early childhood system.

HB 6359 will be an improvement for everyone in the early childhood system, most importantly for all children and families. This proposal, with an Office of Early Childhood that reports directly to the Governor, will give early childhood services and programs the focus and attention they deserve. This creates one place for the coordination and delivery of early



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childhood services. By coordinating in one agency, the state will be able to identify gaps in services and make informed policy decisions.

The current delivery of early childhood services is fragmented over many agencies, making it confusing for parents and inefficient for service providers. The new Office of Early Childhood will move early childhood programs from 5 State agencies into the new Office in order to simplify the process of ensuring that all programs and services are of the highest quality and families have information and access to these services. As we all know, research shows that investing in early childhood saves in the future. Currently, with programs in several different agencies, early childhood is not getting the focus needed to achieve the maximum return on investment.

CAHS urges the committee to support the Governor's Bill No. 6359, An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System. Thank you.