



Testimony before the Education Committee  
Governor's Bill 6359 - An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System  
Testimony by Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director  
Connecticut Parent Power  
Friday, February 15, 2013

Good afternoon, 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 Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director of Connecticut Parent Power a statewide parent-led organization that engages, educates and mobilizes diverse parents from across the state to act on issues that matter most to them improving outcomes for all children in areas of early childhood, care, education, health care reform and K-12 school systems.

Connecticut Parent Power works hand in hand with collaborative statewide partners such as the Connecticut Association for Human Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance and All Our Kin whom all support HB6359 – An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System.

Connecticut Parent Power would like to take a moment to commend the legislature for their shared vision in passing Public Act 11-181, which was the driving force that led to developing an Office of Early Childhood. For the past nine months or so, Connecticut Parent Power, alongside statewide partners and most importantly parents have worked together to produce a plan for early childhood that would continue to cultivate a system that works for all children and families.

We commend the selection of a very dynamic leadership team for this critical role to shape an early childhood system that reflects reality for all diverse children and their families. Myra Jones-Taylor, alongside her team, included many parents from across our state, partners and providers to ensure that voices at every level were heard. Through regional parent forums many lessons were learned. It was evidenced by the power of parent and children stories that our present system is broken and very fragmented and there needs to be a BOLD and innovative change to attain the system necessary that is parent and child centered.

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers. They need the appropriate information in a timely fashion that allow them to lift up their voices to make informed



decisions to improve access, quality and affordability to programs that will indeed positively impact the lives of their children. This office with its present construct will be flexible enough to embrace the local community voice at every level – to ensure that no child is forgotten in any community!

HB 6359 is a promising improvement for every stakeholder that is invested in the early childhood system for the greater good of our most vulnerable, our children and parents. 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 childhood services. As one agency, the state will be able to identify gaps in services and make informed policy decisions.

The Governor’s plan is smart, bold and is a ground-breaking step that will bring cohesiveness to our currently fragmented early childhood services. Each one of our parents is looking forward to having the establishment of an Office of Early Childhood that understands the importance of impacting the spaces and places that wrap services around a child because “this is best practice.”

As you know, research shows that investing early during the youngest years of a child’s life, gives us stronger returns in their future (socially, emotionally, physically and academically).

Currently, with programs in several different agencies, preventive measures for early childhood is not focused on to attain the maximum benefits from and with our children.

By coordinating early childhood services, leveraging resources, and creating better efficiencies, the state will be able to identify gaps in services, critical needs, and make informed funding and policy decisions that in the end are best for all children and families.

Although this bill is lengthy with many pieces, our parents across the state believe that with continued inclusive efforts, they will work hand in hand with you to clarify the language that may require adjustments. Addressing changes to the School Readiness statute seems to be aimed at providing greater flexibility. As the bill moves forward, it will be important to get a better understanding of how these changes will work, and ensure the bill language matches the intent.



Connecticut Parent Power will continue to be available as a resource to the Legislature, the Planning Team, and the Administration to help in any way during this valuable process.

I know you, the Education Committee all care about the wellness of our children and parents by building an early childhood system that works. Connecticut Parent Power, alongside its 3046 parents across the state are counting on you to support HB 6359.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and we look forward to your support of this critical and bold bill.

**Connecticut Parent Power**

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