



***Testimony of Mark Waxenberg
Executive Director, Connecticut Education Association***

Before the Education Committee

***Regarding Governor's Bill No.6359 'An Act Creating An Early
Childhood System'***

February 15, 2013

**Connecticut Education
Association**

Governance

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Good Morning Chairman Fleischman, Chairman Stillman, and members of The Education Committee: My name is Mark Waxenberg, Executive Director for Connecticut Education Association, representing 40,000 teachers across the state.

I am here to speak about Governor's Bill 6359, 'An Act Creating An Early Childhood System'.

Connecticut teachers believe that the greatest potential for Connecticut to close the achievement gap is in its ability to provide high quality educational opportunities to young learners facing the greatest obstacles. The CEA has long been a proponent of improving early childhood education by, among other goals, requiring bachelor's degrees and certification for pre-kindergarten educators.

The legislature endorsed this goal when it passed legislation phasing in a requirement for an Associate and 4-year degree in 2000 (00-187). It further moved toward the more rigorous credential of a State Department of Education certification (PA 05-245). Unfortunately, Connecticut has continually postponed reaching these goals and this bill postpones it again, from 2015 to 2018.

This potentially delays long-awaited assurances that more trained educators will be in place to help close the achievement gap affecting our youngest learners.

Early education is critically important for all students to reach their potential; it is doubly critical toward closing the achievement gap. At a time that we are improving standards for certification, this bill lowers the standards for pre-school. This takes us in the wrong direction.

By continually delaying higher standards for early childhood educators, we perpetuate low wages, exacerbate high turnover, and fuel a revolving door system of employment that cannot be expected to meet our expectations.

Advocates of early education have long urged the state to implement higher standards by requiring early childhood certification. Past legislatures have agreed. We urge this committee to reject any legislation that delays or compromised this goal.

Thank you.