



**Testimony Presented to the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
February 15, 2013**

Senator Andrea Stillman, Representative Andrew Fleischman, and members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Governor's Bill No. 6359, *An Act Concerning An Early Childhood System*.

HB 6359 proposes an Office of Early Childhood (OEC) that will be one coordinating agency for early childhood programs and services that presently reside in five agencies – the State Dept. of Education, Department of Social Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Developmental Services, and the Board of Regents. Reporting directly to the Governor will give early childhood services and programs the attention that is so needed, eliminate the current fragmentation and improve efficiency, effectiveness and quality. Coordinating in one agency will also allow for the identification of gaps in services and the making of informed policy decisions. 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.

We support the continued role of School Readiness Councils and local decision-making provided in this bill. There are some changes to the School Readiness statutes that appear 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 that the bill's language is consistent with its intent. We are happy to work with you to do so.

Lastly and most importantly, we want to thank the legislature for having the vision to pass P.A.-181 which called for the development of a plan to coordinate Connecticut's early childhood services. The Early Childhood Planning Team, led by Myra Jones-Taylor, has been working diligently over the last nine months outreaching to teachers, administrators, programs, and parents. Their conscientious and careful work has been very impressive and resulted in the proposals in this bill, and we applaud them. Bill 6359 is a giant leap forward that will improve services for young children and their families. It shapes a bold and big idea that will be good for Connecticut. We ask that you vote this bill out of committee and encourage your legislative colleagues to vote affirmatively when it is called in the House and the Senate.

Thank you for your careful consideration of our comments.

The Middletown School Readiness Council, a member of the CT Early Childhood Alliance

Daniel Drew, Mayor

Dr. Patricia Charles, Superintendent of Schools

Betsy Morgan, Council Chair, Middlesex Coalition for Children

Rev. Robyn Anderson, A.M.E. Zion Church

Monica Belyea, Parent

Wendy Berlind, Grandparent

Ed Bonilla, Middlesex United Way

Sheila Daniels, Board of Education

Christine Fahey, School Readiness Coordinator

Elizabeth Fraser, Adult Education Even Start Program

James Gaudreau, Principal, Wilbert Snow School

Lisa Golebiewski, Director, CRT Head Start Program

Tina Gomes, Special Projects, Manager & Budget Analyst to the Mayor

Daria Keyes, Middlesex Hospital Family Advocacy Program

Beverly Lawrence, CT Parent Power

Dr. Jerome Long, Grandparent

Susan Macary, Parent

Donna Marino, Community Partnership Coordinator

Dr. Cliff O'Callahan, Pediatrician, Middlesex Family Medicine Residency Program

Christine O'Grady, Child FIRST, Middlesex Hospital

Courtney Perales, Student Intern, Mercy High School

Ann Perzan, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education

Kitty Robinson, Children's Department Head, Russell Library

Dr. Robert Rosenbaum, Chair, PIMMS, Wesleyan University

Susan Sienkiewicz, Dept. of Children and Families

Dr. Alice Torres, Area Cooperative Education Services, Early Head Start

Amy Waterman, Director, Family Resource Centers