



**Catholic Charities**

*Archdiocese of Hartford*

February 15, 2013

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 6359  
An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System**

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and esteemed members of the Committee on Education, my name is Tiffany Murasso. I am the Director of Early Childhood & Family Center Programs at Catholic Charities and I am here to testify in favor of House Bill 6359, An Act Concerning an Early Childhood System.

As an early care and education provider in Connecticut, Catholic Charities has been navigating the State's complex service delivery system for almost 20 years. Catholic Charities currently serves 344 children in 10 state licensed, accredited Early Childhood Education programs funded through the State Department of Education's School Readiness program.

HB 6359 will enhance the entire early childhood system, most importantly improve services for children and families. Research shows that investing in early childhood saves in the future. However, the current delivery of early childhood services is fragmented throughout several state agencies, making it confusing for parents and inefficient for service providers. The proposed Office of Early Childhood will move early childhood programs from 5 agencies - the State Department of Education, Department of Social Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Developmental Services, and the Board of Regents - into one new office reducing the fragmentation and simplifying the process of insuring that all programs and services are of the highest quality and families have information and access to a coordinated system of services.

This proposal, with an Office of Early Childhood that reports directly to the Governor, will give early childhood services and programs added focus and attention. This creates one place for the coordination and delivery of early childhood services. By coordinating in one agency, the state will be able to identify gaps in services and make informed policy decisions.

I must commend the Early Childhood planning team, lead by Myra Jones-Taylor for developing this plan after a very impressive and commendable process of study and outreach to everyone in early childhood - parents, teachers, programs, and administrators- over the last 9 months.

I would like to thank the Governor for proposing the bill and the committee on education for holding this public hearing. I ask for your support of HB 6359 and am available to answer any questions you may have.