



Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Regarding Support for the following Senate Bills:
S.B. 25 – An Act Concerning the Office of Early Childhood Moving into Statute
S.B. 26 – An Act Concerning the Expansion of 1020 Early Childhood Spaces
Submitted by Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director
Connecticut Parent Power
Monday, February 23, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Beth Bye, Representative Walker and Distinguished Appropriations Committee Team:

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.

For the past 3 years, our organization has worked diligently alongside our statewide partners that include CT Voices for Children, CT Association for Human Services, All Our Kin, and the CT Early Childhood Alliance with hundreds of parents, providers and constituents to ensure that our most vulnerable children, alongside their families are kept in the forefront when decisions are being made to ensure the well being of all children and families.

Connecticut Parent Power is here today to ask that you all continue to support the following bills:

- ~ S.B. 25 – An Act Concerning the Office of Early Childhood moving into statute
- ~ S.B. 26 – An Act Concerning the Expansion of 1020 Early Childhood Spaces

We are looking to finishing off our collective work effectively, efficiently and most of all equitably to ensure that all children have access to a quality and sound start through the full establishment of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

The Governor's present proposed budget is focused in expanding access to high quality early childhood education for all young children "right from the start!" This proposed budget is bold as it expands an additional 1020 spaces to access quality pre-kindergarten experiences, which is critical for our low-income children and their families to be able to take advantage of this opportunity that will be life changing for appropriate social, emotional, physical and educational growth.

For too long our services and programs have been fragmented and difficult to navigate for our families. Having had the experience to work with the OEC for the past two years, alongside our parents and partners, we have seen what we are capable of accomplishing together! We have spent hundreds of hours working collectively to share our vision for our Connecticut children and do believe that the OEC will be instrumental, as an effective structure for creating a system that fosters the quality in all early childhood settings that provide a one point of entry into a family friendly system to be able to access necessary resources with less confusion to get to the core that matters, affordable, accessible and child-



centered outcomes for all children. Although the Office of Early Childhood has begun to shape the services and programs for Connecticut families, there is still so much to get done with our collective action. Parents and families want the systems-level changes required to streamline costs, while bringing a high level of transparency to our stakeholders that are willing to work towards solution based action to ensure this works for all children and their families.

This is an exciting time for the state of Connecticut! We have a Governor and leaders, like yourselves, that have recognized that early is good, but earlier is better...by coordinating our early childhood programs and services through the creation of the OEC is what will lead us all into a preventive investment that will pay off in the long run. In the past year, we have seen the OEC work with partners, like CTPP and statewide team, to begin the creation of a system that improves outcomes for children, encouraging more family engagement through statewide conversations, creating early screening tools with appropriate referral process that will in turn coordinate data structures that ensure all children enter a sound system with the necessary resources.

Connecticut Parent Power acknowledges the considerable investment of time and cost for an equitable early childhood systems build approach, however, safe, quality care and education should always be at the forefront when it comes to our most vulnerable - our children. Therefore, the aforementioned pieces are essential if we are going to create a comprehensive, family-friendly, coordinated system of services and programs that will provide a quality start for all of our Connecticut children and their families.

We believe that the Governor's proposed budget is a bold and sound budget for all children, and that the final step in moving the Office of Early Childhood into statute is crucial at this time to ensure the well-being of children, alongside their families and the invested stakeholders who care about making the future more predictable with the best outcomes that lie within the first 5 years of an innocent child's life. Please continue to finish the work we started for the future of all of our children by supporting S.B. 25 and S.B. 26! In advance, I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Makilyn Calderón". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Makilyn Calderón
Executive Director
CT Parent Power