

Testimony on Early Childhood Budget

Dear Senator Beth Bye, Representative Toni Walker and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carol Sargent – Director of the School Readiness Program at the Childcare Learning Centers, Inc in Stamford, CT. The Childcare Learning Centers, Inc serves approximately 1,000 children from birth through 5 years of age each year providing affordable, comprehensive early childhood education and care to the children and families.

I am writing this testimony in support of the budget for the Office of Early Childhood in House Bill 5030, An act making adjustments to state expenditures for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2015.

The mission and vision of the Office of Early Childhood is to create a comprehensive, coordinated system of early care and education. The expansion of access to Pre-K will entail new approaches and creative use of existing funds to ensure continued high quality settings and retention of excellent highly qualified teachers in all settings. Rate increases for existing opportunities is long over due and necessary to maintain and improve on the high quality programs we are currently providing. Research is clear that the teacher-child interaction is the single most important component that leads to optimal child outcomes. The Office of Early Childhood will help to ensure a focus on bringing disparate programs in public and private settings into one seamless program with the same standards and expectations for child outcomes

The budget represents a significant commitment to early childhood and recognizes the critical importance of access to high quality early education for children in all settings.

We appreciate the proposed rate increases in the child care subsidy program Care4Kids for centers and respectfully ask that the budget reflects 3% increase for the total amount of state and federal part of the grant. In order for the State Funded Centers to get the intended 3% increase and maintain rate parity with School Readiness, roughly \$500,000 must be added to the Child Care Services line item. The 3% increase was erroneously calculated on only the state half of the total allocation to the State Funded Centers, the other half coming from a federal block grant that does not appear in the state budget.

Thank you for your attention in reading this testimony!

Please support the Governor's proposed budget for early childhood!