**TESTIMONY**
**DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**
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**CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS**
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The CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) supports the establishment of a Department of Early Childhood for the following reasons.

- It is CAPSS' position that unless all the factors that affect a child's learning are addressed, the goal of every child learning what they need to know and be able to do to lead decent and productive lives will not be reached. Many of the negative factors that affect a child's learning stem from the economic situation into which children are born. Those factors affect a child's ability to learn from the moment they are born and by the time that they reach public schools the negative effects are significant.

- No one community in the state can address this situation all by itself. A successful effort in this regard must be coordinated at the state level. A Department of Early Childhood with separate standing will be the agency that will lead this effort.

- There are many private providers of early childhood programs. They vary in quality. A Department of Early Childhood will have the standing to develop and implement a quality rating system for these programs.

CAPSS expresses this support with the following caveat. It is CAPSS' position that education for all children should begin when they are three years old and should be so structured that children proceed in accordance with the pace most appropriate for them and with their primary learning styles. Having one state agency, the Department of Early Childhood, responsible for a portion of these programs and another, the CT State Department Education, responsible for the remainder would put school districts in the difficult position of having to relate to two different agencies for a program that is continuous in nature.

Accordingly, CAPSS urges the Legislature to stipulate in its establishment of the Department of Early Childhood that the Department and the CT State Department of Education form a group composed of relevant personnel from local school districts to develop a structure that will not put school districts in the position of having to relate to two different state agencies for two different portions of a continuous program for children.

As always, CAPSS representatives are willing to discuss this issue with any interested party.