

## **TESTIMONY – Appropriations Committee Public Hearing**

**I have been a professional in the field since 1970, and am currently the Director of the Gateway Community College Early Learning Center, a laboratory and teaching school with 60 preschoolers. As such, I support this proposed budget. There are three items in the budget that are particularly important to me (as well as my colleagues), and I ask for your support to make these items a reality.**

**Support for the Office of Early Childhood is essential for coordinating all early childhood programs. Subsidies through School Readiness and State-Funded Centers do not reflect the actual cost of care to maintain quality ; there needs to minimally be a three-percent increase. School Readiness rates have remained unchanged since the program’s inception. Family providers and licensed centers similarly need an increase for the same reasons as the other subsidized programs, retroactive to January 2014.**

**Access to preschool is expanding, yet programs cannot flourish, in light of diminishing funds. Three state college laboratory preschools have closed, e. g., and these programs are critical in training a new/expanding early childhood work force, as well as providing quality preschool education.**

**Universal quality preschool prepares children for kindergarten and lifelong learning. This investment ensures less social/educational interventions later on, and a greater certainty that children will finish school and aspire to a college education.**

**Marjorie Weiner, Director Gateway Community College Early Learning Center**