State of Connecticut

Office of Early Childhood

Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

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Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
S.B. 340 – An Act Concerning a Two-Generational School Readiness Plan
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Good morning, Senator Bye, Representative Walker, ranking members Senator Kane and Representative Miner, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding S.B. 340 – An Act Concerning a Two-Generational School Readiness Plan.

The Office of Early Childhood appreciates the intention of this bill, which promotes a two-generational learning model as a promising practice to support both parents and children. A two-generational learning model aims to dually address both the employment and educational needs of parents and the developmental and learning needs of their young children.

The Departments of Social Services and Labor work collaboratively to support adults in gaining work skills and attaining employment through programs funded by Temporary Family Assistance. These two agencies ensure that children of these families are connected with early childhood services. The State Department of Education oversees adult education programs, which serve many of the adults this bill addresses. The Office of Early Childhood, as the state agency overseeing early childhood services for many of these very same families, will collaborate with DSS, DOL, and SDE to collectively focus both on education, skills training and work supports for adults and the healthy development of young children.

There are several promising two-generational models being implemented in Connecticut right now. The Office of Early Childhood funds Even Start, which is a two-generational learning program, operating in three communities: Middletown, New London and Torrington. The program has five components: 1) adult education; 2) quality early child care and education; 3) parenting education; 4) parent and child interactive literacy; and 5) home visiting. This program, formerly supported through federal funding, has been continued with state funding because policy makers recognize its positive outcomes for parents and children.

I will share data about the demographics of Connecticut's Even Start families. Based on recent data, upon entry into Even Start, 35% of parents had less than a high school education and 56% had some high school but no diploma, 86% had incomes at or below the federal poverty level, and 36% were

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involved in some way with the Department of Children and Families. In these households, 48% of children were infants and toddlers, and 52% were between 3 and 6 years of age.

Recent data shows families average 69 hours per month attending classes and remain enrolled in the program, on average, 12 months or longer. This is remarkable given that these individuals have experienced challenges in schooling and have dropped out of high school.

In addition, parents meet formerly with early childhood and parenting educators on average, 8 times per year to discuss their child's educational goals and developmental progress. About 93% of adults demonstrate progress with adult education; 48% exiting the program complete high school; 90% of adults make significant gains in family literacy skills; and 82% of the children make expected gains in meeting standards in reading and reading readiness skills.

The Office of Early Childhood looks forward to continued support of Even Start as a proven two-generational learning model. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.