

Testimony of

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Good afternoon, Senator By, Representative Walker and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Kate Parr. I am an economist and research professor at the University of Connecticut. I thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Raised Bill 340, An Act Concerning a Two Generation School Readiness Plan.

Two – generation education strategies represent an opportunity to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by promoting both educational attainment and economic security. Here in Connecticut, Connecticut Even Start is a two-generation literacy program that has demonstrated the potential for this approach. This program is a dual generation learning program for parents and their children that emphasizes literacy, healthy parent-child interaction and family self-reliance through parent education. As researcher at the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis / UConn, I led a study of the long term outcomes of Connecticut's Even Start Program.

The study utilized the substantial outcomes data collected internally by Connecticut Even Start and a telephone survey of former program participants. In regards to this bill, I want to emphasize three main findings:

1. The families that participate in Connecticut Even Start are high need families. They have low English fluency, low educational attainment, high rates of poverty and high rates of dependence on public services. Based on internal program data, parents fit the following profile:
 - a. 35% had less than a high school level education
 - b. 56% had some high school experience but no diploma
 - c. 36% reported DCF involvement
 - d. 61% did not have English as their primary language
 - e. all were living at less than 130% of the federal poverty level standards.It is the experience of this and other programs that these families require substantial support just to be able to get to the point that they can participate in the program. Economic and other supports are key inputs to allowing them to participate and complete an educational program.
2. Our findings show the program is transformative in terms of family self-reliance.

- a. Relative to their peers, after even start families were twice as likely to be labor force participants.
- b. After Even Start more than 50% of families go on to additional training or education.
- c. Annual household income increased by 40% overall.
- d. Earnings increased \$12,000 per year on average for Connecticut Even Start participants who entered the work force.

Dual generation programs help break the cycle of poverty by increasing opportunity, incomes and workforce participation.

3. Connecticut Even Start families increased their resilience and ability to advocate for themselves and families. After participating in Connecticut Even Start:
 - a. 96% of parents continued to have routine contact with their childrens' teachers;
 - b. home ownership increased by 63% while use of housing rental subsidies decreased by 29%.

Parents become advocates for themselves and their children in school and in their communities.

I am speaking in support of this bill because programs like Connecticut Even Start work. Parents and children learning together have synergies that are not captured by single generation approaches. Children serve as a motivating factor for adults and adults can serve as an inspiration for children. Further, programs like Connecticut Even Start provide wrap around services and linkages to existing services families need to participate and complete educational programs, while at the same time teaching families to advocate and problem-solve for themselves.

Thank-you for your attention.