



c/o United Way of Western CT
85 West St., Danbury, CT 06810
caroline.lafleur@uwwesternct.org
203-300-1486

February 27, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleishmann, and Members of the Committee:

I am Caroline LaFleur, the Director of Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership, a community partnership whose mission is to ensure that all Danbury children are healthy and ready for school. I am writing this testimony in support of Senate Bill #25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood. I strongly feel that creating the Office of Early Childhood as a central administrative structure that houses the agencies that touch the lives of Connecticut's young children will better serve our youngest citizens, and ensure a brighter future for our state.

Evidence mounts daily on the importance of early childhood and the need to support families in the raising of their children. Children who receive the services they need at a young age are less likely to require expensive, remedial services later in life and are more likely to have successful educational and life outcomes. Our future economy and quality of life depends on their success. To work best, services for young children must be coordinated, and function collaboratively. This is best achieved by housing those services under one roof. Until last year, services were spread across five agencies, creating administrative challenges and logistical dysfunction.

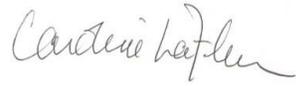
A state Office of Early Childhood not only eliminates wasteful bureaucracy, it enhances service coordination, and elevates early childhood to the level of importance it deserves for the future of our state and its economy. Currently, the Office of Early Childhood only exists under Executive Order. To ensure its longevity, it must be put into statute.

Recently, the City of Danbury recognized the importance of early childhood by creating an Office of Early Childhood and appointing our early childhood collaborative, Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership, to operate that office. The creation of this office sent a signal to our community that supporting early childhood is important to the future of our city. It also emphasized the value of service coordination and collaboration. A creation of a state Office of Early Childhood will do the same at the state level, and will enhance interaction between state and city entities.

I also want to express support for the "grandfathering" language in this bill. It is very important for teachers and programs, and I urge your support of grandfathering staff that have a Bachelor's

degree with 12 credits in early childhood. We don't want to lose these existing assets from our early childhood system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroline LaFleur". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Caroline LaFleur
Director, Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership