

**TESTIMONY TO EDUCATION COMMITTEE CONCERNING SENATE BILL 25**

**SUBMITTED BY FREDRICK W. JACKSON – MARCH 3, 2014**

**Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Committee**

**My name is Fredrick Jackson and I come before your Committee wearing several hats today:**

**I represent the Social Justice Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut on the Steering Committee of the Early Childhood Alliance, and am a Board member of St. John's Child Care Center – as well as serving as a member of Bridgeport's School Readiness Council.**

**My objective is to convey strong support for SB 25 from all these organizations – which codifies a bold, innovative, and major step forward for Connecticut's children.**

**By now, the importance of early childhood is much more widely accepted than it was eight years ago when I unexpectedly found myself as the only businessman locked up with 60 experts in early childhood charged with drafting Bridgeport's Blueprint for Young Children! As the former Co-Chair of the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children, I now know full well that the first five years of life set the stage for success – or failure –throughout the rest of a child's life. We also know that dollars spent in effective early care programs have a significant payback for society in increased academic success, lower involvement in criminal activity, less unemployment, etc.**

**Codifying the Office of Early Childhood created by Executive Order last year will assure that the OEC will be able to tackle their most significant challenge. That is, the coordination of the State's childcare programs once spread out over five large Agencies.**

For example, a program of major importance to families like Care 4 Kids is only a minor portion of the DSS mandate - while it becomes a major focus of the OEC, allowing coordination with programs such as School Readiness. I would note that Care 4 Kids is the major funder of our Center's Infant and Toddler program – which primarily serves low income working parents – so improving its efficiency and effectiveness is a key concern for us.

One element of SB25 I would bring to your attention is the “Grandfathering” of current teachers – necessary not only to protect the good people now working with our kids, but also helping us to serve the increasing number of children that will be added to programs such as School Readiness over the next several years.

Beyond the passage of SB25, I would urge you to keep in mind the need to examine the work being done by the local Early Childhood Collaboratives active in many of our towns and cities. At some - hopefully not too distant – time, such an examination should include how to best to expand/support their efforts and how their voices might be better heard in places such as Office of Early Childhood.