

**TESTIMONY  
BEFORE THE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
MARCH 3, 2014**

My name is Jennifer Herz and I am Assistant Counsel for the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA represents approximately 10,000 businesses throughout Connecticut and the vast majority of these are small companies employing less than 50 people.

A top priority for CBIA is preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Therefore, CBIA urges your **support of SB 25 An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood and SB 26 An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education.**

Increasing access to quality early childhood education is key to ensuring Connecticut develops a steady supply of talent for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Quality preschool programs mean students enter kindergarten ready to learn. To that end, establishing the Office of Early Childhood will provide a strong base of support to coordinate early childhood education. Establishing the proper infrastructure for these programs is crucial for success. The Office of Early Childhood will have the necessary expertise and resources to support the programs.

Additionally, quality must be the central factor for such early childhood programs and furthermore, parents must be able to assess these programs in order to make informed choices for their children.

CBIA recognizes that Connecticut's skilled workforce is one of our best competitive advantages and initiatives like this – expanding access to quality preschool programs – will support Connecticut's strong performance in this important area.

Quality preschool programming with a strong supporting infrastructure will give Connecticut's students the tools the need to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century and keep Connecticut's workforce competitive in a global economy.

CBIA urges your **support of SB 25 and SB 26.** Thank you for the opportunity to offer CBIA's comments.