Hartford Foundation
for Public Giving

Testimony before the Education Committee
S.B. 25 - An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood
S.B. 26 An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education
Submitted by Linda J. Kelly, President
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Monday, March 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

I am Linda J. Kelly, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (Hartford Foundation), the community foundation for the 29-town greater Hartford region. Our mission is to put philanthropy into action to create lasting solutions that result in vibrant communities within the Greater Hartford region. For more than two decades, the Foundation has invested significantly in early childhood through its *Brighter Futures Initiative* and its support to the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative. Our new strategic work builds upon this deep knowledge and experience to advance systemic solutions and new partnerships that address the root causes of the educational inequities facing the children in our region and ensure that these children, especially those most disadvantaged, are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.

The Hartford Foundation strongly supports S.B. 25 that creates in statute the Office of Early Childhood. The statutory establishment of a statewide Office of Early Childhood, reporting directly to the Governor and bringing together early childhood services and programs from diverse state agencies, is essential for a high-quality, comprehensive, and coordinated system of early childhood services. As a community foundation, we value the conceptual vision embodied in the Office of Early Childhood that understands the child in the context of the family and community. Through our work, we know that an array of services and supports are required to increase opportunities for children. We need an Office of Early Childhood that provides vision and leadership to increase shared planning, coordination, and funding within and across the various systems responsible for learning, health and family support. In addition, through our experience as a funder, we acknowledge and appreciate the role that a statewide Office of Early Childhood can play in building bridges between local and regional early childhood experiences and strategies and state early childhood policy and practice.

We recognize the work of Myra Jones-Taylor and her team, who have worked tirelessly to listen directly to families and providers, philanthropy and other stakeholders across the state and begun to implement best practice research to inform the development of the new Office. Legislation and funding is required to ensure a much needed transformation of Connecticut's current delivery of early childhood services from a fragmented array of programs and funding streams over many agencies to an integrated, cost-effective and coordinated system. **The Hartford Foundation urges the Education Committee to fully support the creation of the Office of Early Childhood.**

The Hartford Foundation also strongly supports S.B. 26 that expands high-quality early childhood education to towns designated as an alliance district, but whose school district is not a priority school district. The new eligibility to access high-quality, accredited prekindergarten programs increases opportunities for children in the region served by the Hartford Foundation -- in Bloomfield, East Windsor, Manchester, Vernon, Windsor and Windsor Locks -- to arrive at the Kindergarten door ready to learn and succeed.

10 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-548-1888
Fax: 860-524-8346
www.hfpg.org

Board of Directors
Yvette Meléndez, *Chair*
Bonnie J. Malley, *Vice Chair*
Robert B. Goldfarb, *Treasurer*
Nancy P. Bernstein
David M. Borden
Beverly P. Greenberg
Rodney O. Powell
JoAnn H. Price
Theodore S. Sergi

President
Linda J. Kelly

Serving

Andover	Manchester
Avon	Marlborough
Bloomfield	Newington
Bolton	Rocky Hill
Canton	Simsbury
East Granby	Somers
East Hartford	South Windsor
East Windsor	Suffield
Ellington	Tolland
Enfield	Vernon
Farmington	West Hartford
Glastonbury	Wethersfield
Granby	Windsor
Hartford	Windsor Locks
Hebron	

cf NATIONAL STANDARDS

Here to help.
Here to stay.