



**State of Connecticut**  
**SENATOR DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR.**  
*Twenty-ninth District*  
**President Pro Tempore**

**Testimony before the Education Committee**  
**Donald E. Williams, Jr.**

**March 3, 2014**

**In support of SB 26, *An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education***

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 26, *An Act Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education*.

I applaud Governor Malloy's effort to focus attention on the issue of universal pre-kindergarten and the need to give every child in Connecticut access to a quality pre-kindergarten experience. Access to quality pre-kindergarten plays a key role in an effective education system, and is quite possibly the single most important step we can take in school reform efforts to improve student educational outcomes.

The research demonstrates that when children, particularly those facing barriers to educational success, participate in high quality Pre-K experiences, they come to kindergarten better prepared to learn and show academic gains that stay with them into the future. They have greater math skills than children who did not attend Pre-K and are more likely to read at grade level. Furthermore, they require less remediation in later grades, are less likely to repeat grades and have less need for special education. The Chicago Longitudinal Study, a study of 1500 mostly low-income Chicago children who attended publicly funded Pre-K programs, showed that those children were 41% less likely to need special education services. Into the future, children who have had quality Pre-K are less likely to become pregnant in their teenage years and to engage in criminal activity. The Chicago study also showed that the children who attended Pre-K were 30% more likely to graduate from high school. Not surprisingly, children with Pre-K experiences have been shown to have higher earnings and are less likely to rely on the social safety net.

Although Pre-K programs may be expensive, studies have shown that those costs are outweighed by the savings created in these other areas. Every dollar that we invest in quality early childhood education programs will save taxpayers \$7 in avoided costs down the road – in special education, remediation, criminal justice, and social services.



I would suggest that as we consider the Governor's proposal to add 1020 new School Readiness slots in Priority School Districts, and to increase School Readiness rates by 3%, we keep in mind that these are first steps on the road toward universal access to pre-kindergarten. As we travel down this road, we can learn from the experiences of other cities, counties and states as we build a comprehensive system that reaches all Connecticut children who would otherwise not have access to Pre-K. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.