

## Written Testimony re: HB6824

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is June G. Malone. I am the Coordinator of the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children and the Director of Birth to Eight for the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County. I am submitting testimony today regarding HB6824.

My testimony today is in support of the funding for the early childhood collaboratives, currently funded through the Office of Early Childhood's (OEC) line item "Community Plans for Early Childhood." The funding from the OEC, is relatively small, but is very important as it serves as an indicator of the State's support for the work being done on the ground in our local communities and encourages additional funders and authorities to recognize and support our collective work. Bridgeport receives \$38,000 from this line item which is then leveraged and matched resulting in more than \$1.8 million to support the work of our local collaborative.

The Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children (BAYC) is Bridgeport's local early childhood collaborative. The collaborative is comprised of providers, parents, policy makers and funders, and represents the needs of Bridgeport's children, from conception through the third grade. The collaborative is a diverse group of over 50 individuals and organizations dedicated to improving outcomes for all Bridgeport children ages prenatal-8 and their families and serves a vital function in the city as it coordinates the:

- **Bridgeport's School Readiness Council** – serves more than 1,000 children across the city
- **Bridgeport's Provider's Network** – brings best practices to a diverse group of providers both public and private
- **Bridgeport's Help Me Grow Collaborative** – is a collaborative of health care providers, family resource centers, the city's library, diaper banks, parent centers and others that teach parents of the city's youngest and most vulnerable children to screen and track their own child's development, resulting in the early identification of potential developmental delays and teaching parents how to be their child's first teacher.
- **Home Visitation Advisory Council** – a collaborative currently providing home visiting services to more than 400 of our most at risk children.
- **Community Messengers** – a group of trained parents who bring information to their neighbors, friends, and family about city resources and who represent the voice of children and their families to the city's providers and policy makers.
- **Early Literacy Partnership** -- provides high quality professional development to pre-school providers and measures children's gains according to the State's Early Learning and Development Standards.
- **The Early Literacy Programs Task Force** – a task force comprised of experts from the Public Schools, research experts, parents and community experts -- that is identifying which early literacy programs have data, which ones have evidence, and based on those findings, which ones should be supported for scale-up or replication.
- **Kick Off to Kindergarten program** – a summer program that prepares children who are Kindergarten bound but who have not had a pre-school experience.

**As a result of the efforts of our local early childhood collaborative, Bridgeport was named a Pace-Setter Community by the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading.**

**Currently there is \$750,000 in an Office of Early Childhood (OEC) line item “community plans for early childhood”. This is a misnomer. Bridgeport’s plan was developed several years ago. Currently our work is to implement the strategies identified in our plan, which serves as our guide. The loss of the State’s support will result in loss of matching funds that are contributed through private donations and foundations. The total loss will devastate Bridgeport’s capacity to implement the changes and strategies detailed in our collaborative’s plan, will jeopardize Bridgeport’s capacity to support a local system of early childhood services and supports and will devastate not only our work across the city, but our capacity to work in unison with the State’s Office of Early Childhood and the State Department of Education.**

**It is therefore critical, that the line-item for “Community Plans for Early Childhood” be maintained and continued in order to support the work of local collaboratives in Bridgeport and across the state.**