



*All New Haven children, birth through 8 are healthy, safe, thriving in nurturing families
and prepared to be successful lifelong learners.*

Dear Senator Bye and Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Gail Ford, and I am the Coordinator of the New Haven Early Childhood Council. I am submitting this testimony for **HB No. 6824**. to urge you to reinstate the funding for Community Plans for Early Childhood Collaboratives.

These funds enable local early childhood councils across the state to ensure more children have access to early care and education, to enhance the quality of early care and education, and to engage with parents to support their children's health and development. The state dollars have leveraged significant philanthropic investment from the Graustein Memorial Fund through their Discovery grants.

In New Haven, the New Haven Early Childhood Council (NHECC) is the Local Early Childhood Council (LECC) and has been a Discovery Community receiving funds since 2008. The Council is a broad representation of child serving organizations in New Haven to identify the needs of families of children 0 to 8 to ensure that needs are identified and plans are developed to meet those needs. The NHECC also advises the Mayor and Superintendent on early childhood issues as required by State Statute sec10-16r.

The Discovery and state funding have had a tremendous payoff for the children and families in New Haven. Some of our specific results include:

- Increasing by 800 the number of quality, subsidized PreK spaces and opening nine early childhood centers across the city.
- Leveraging over \$2 million in grant dollars over the last 10 years to improve quality in early childhood programs and outreach and services to families with young children.
- Helping launch the Tool Kit Licensing project as a way to support family child care providers. This project, which has been implemented by All Our Kin, has been replicated throughout CT. More than 150 caregivers in New Haven have received training, mentoring, and support to become high-quality licensed providers and successful small business owners.
- Promoting the importance of early literacy through teacher training, parent activities, and providing thousands of high-quality picture books to classrooms and families. We are currently working in the third year of a Dual Language Pilot Program for 3 and 4 year olds that focuses on a prescribed teaching model and a family engagement aspect that encourages literacy, in the 6th year of a program called WORDS and NUMBERS that provides coaching to early childhood center teachers and family child care providers.
- Increasing parents' knowledge about how to register their child in PreK and Kindergarten, how to prepare children for Kindergarten, and important developmental milestones. This work is being done in partnership with the New Haven Public Schools and includes a pilot program in twelve classrooms (PreK and Kindergarten) to teach executive function skills.
- Increasing the availability of mental health services for young children and their families through replication of the evidence-based Child First initiative in partnership with Clifford Beers.

Without this funding, the NHECC loses the ability to convene members and stakeholders to raise issues, collect and analyze data, and create effective, collaborative strategies to grow and nurture the early childhood system in New Haven. The work will become more fragmented, and less effective, and we will be sorely limited in our ability to leverage additional funding to support this critical work.

Thank you.

Gail Ford, Coordinator