

## Testimony for Hearing on HB 6004

### Public Hearing Appropriations

Submitted by :

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March 2, 2015

The Honorable Senator, Beth Bye  
The Honorable Representative, Toni E. Walker  
Co-Chairmen, Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Bye , Chairman Walker, Ranking Members- Senator Robert Kane and Representative Melissa Ziobron, and Committee Members:

I am writing to indicate my support for HB 6004 and ask that the Committee restore the Community Plans for Early Childhood line item in the Office of Early Childhood budget. Over the last few years, Coventry's Collaborative has received between \$19,000 and \$21,000 annually from the State of Connecticut; and as you may know, this funding is matched by the Graustein Memorial Fund. Graustein will not commit to supporting early childhood collaboratives until it is known if the Office of Early Childhood will continue their support.

I am a member of Coventry's Early Childhood Readiness Committee as well as a member of the Nurturing Committee of the STEPS Collaborative. Without this funding, we would have not come together to produce the Community Plan for Early Childhood. Without the continued funding, it will be very difficult to implement and continue with updates to our plan.

Without funding, we will have no resources for data collection, publications, community events and engagement, and most importantly the staff that provides leadership. Through this leadership and community support, and after 50 years of pre-schools in church basements, the Town Council (of which I am a member) and the Board of Education are supporting a move to put our program into the schools with four to five classrooms and to have an after-school program. This is a huge accomplishment.

There is still much to be done. As a member of the Nurturing Committee, we have found we have many incidents of domestic abuse and we are working on ways to address this problem through the Collaborative. We are most fortunate to have our Chief of Police as a member of this Committee. We would like to see a Family Resource Center in our community. Through the Collaborative we have brought many groups together to make them aware of the various problems the community faces in the development and care for our children and to gather support to see that they are all nurtured, healthy and engaged.

As a former State Representative, I know you have a tough job before you, but I am hopeful that you will give this a high priority as you move forward and restore this line item to the Budget. Thank you

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