



NORWALK EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL

CITY HALL– ROOM 311
125 East Avenue P.O. Box 6001
Norwalk, Connecticut 06852-6001
(203) 854-4114



March 3, 2015
Testimony on HB 6824

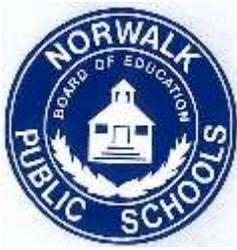
Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

We are writing this letter on behalf of Norwalk's children and families and the more than 40 agencies and individuals who are members of the Norwalk Early Childhood Council (NECC). We are responding to proposed cuts to the 2015-16 state budget and are asking you to restore funding to these crucial programs.

Community Plans for Early Education (The Norwalk Early Childhood Council) —\$20,000 in annual state funding (a public/private dollar for dollar match) coming to Norwalk has been leveraged to bring in **more than \$100,000** in private foundation funding to support home visitation programs for at-risk families, preschool teacher training, a pilot program to assess preschool literacy to establish a community baseline, literacy programs for parents and caregivers to support their children's early literacy development and outreach to families about the supports and services that are available to them. *Please co-sponsor HB6004, An Act Concerning Early Childhood Collaboratives to demonstrate your support for this important work.* This bill strengthens the link between the OEC and local collaboratives. Local collaborative groups are crucial as we connect with children and families in our own communities.

In Norwalk our strong early childhood structure has helped to support a collective impact initiative using the Strive model—in Norwalk that is Norwalk ACTS—the city's cradle to career initiative. The NECC is the convener of the Norwalk ACTS Kindergarten Readiness Community Action Network (KCAN). Several Council members are also on the 3rd Grade Reading CAN and the Implementation Team, providing continuity and connection throughout the organization.

Help Me Grow—This state-wide program serves parents who have concerns about their child's development, connecting them with services and supports beginning at birth. The early detection of developmental delays in children saves thousands of dollars in special education and remedial education costs. Eliminating Help Me Grow will only cost local school districts and the state more money as children who do not receive early intervention services enter school with delays and disabilities that could have been addressed before age 3. In Norwalk, we will be embarking on a community wide effort to create a system where all children will receive developmental screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) which is a component of Help Me Grow. Without that state level support, our local efforts will be severely impacted. Cutting Help Me Grow is short-sighted public policy; it's an investment in our youngest children that we cannot afford to lose.



NORWALK EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL

CITY HALL– ROOM 311
125 East Avenue P.O. Box 6001
Norwalk, Connecticut 06852-6001
(203) 854-4114



Healthy Start—This is the only statewide maternal and child health program designed to provide low-income women and children with important preventive services including case management and health education on high-priority public health issues such as healthcare coverage, prenatal care, pediatric care, perinatal depression, smoking cessation, oral health care and domestic violence. Connecting at-risk women to health insurance and services is vital to ensuring the health and well-being of mother and child.

An independent evaluation of Healthy Start conducted in 2008 found that the program is cost-effective and has measurable cost-savings. Women in the program were less likely to give birth to a preterm baby thus avoiding the significant cost in supporting the long term health, developmental and educational services often associated with preterm births.

In addition to the above programs, which are completely eliminated in the Governor's budget, the following programs have been flat funded, or cut:

School Readiness and School Readiness Quality Enhancement Funds—Flat funding for School Readiness means preschool teachers cannot even get a cost of living raise. Quality Enhancement funds have been cut by 5%, which means fewer training opportunities for Norwalk's preschool teachers, and thus a lower quality learning experience for Norwalk preschoolers.

All of these programs represent relatively small investments of state dollars, which are in some cases (such as the Community Plans) **matched by private foundation dollars and/or leveraged to bring in major grant funding**. Every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education produces a 7 to 10% per annum return on investment. ¹

We hope that we can count on your support for these programs so that Norwalk's children have the support they need beginning at birth. We urge you to lend your support to restored funding for these programs.

Sincerely,

Cathy DeCesare
Co-Chair, Norwalk Early Childhood Council

Bruce Morris
Co-Chair, Norwalk Early Childhood Council

Mary Oster
Discovery Coordinator

¹ Heckman, James J. & Moon, Seong Hyeok & Pinto, Rodrigo & Savelyev, Peter A. & Yavitz, Adam, 2010. "[The Rate of Return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program](#)," Journal of Public Economics, Elsevier, vol. 94(1-2), pages 114-128, February.