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**OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**



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Early Childhood

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**Testimony of Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D., Commissioner**  
**Office of Early Childhood**  
**Before the Committee on Children**  
**S.B. 925 – An Act Establishing a Home Visitation Program Consortium**  
**Tuesday, February 24, 2015**

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Good afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify on S.B. 925 – An Act Establishing a Home Visitation Program Consortium.

The Office of Early Childhood released a report in December 2014, “Connecticut Home Visiting Plan for Families with Young Children,” pursuant to P.A. 13-178. The report was developed in collaboration with stakeholders, both inside and outside of state government. The purpose of the report is to build a framework to better coordinate home visiting programs in Connecticut. This report is an important step toward building a home visiting system that produces better outcomes for our youngest children.

Among the recommendations in the report is the establishment of a Home Visiting Consortium. The stakeholders who were convened to produce the home visiting report felt strongly that the group should continue to meet to continue this important work. The Office of Early Childhood plans to re-convene this dedicated group in March to start implementing components of the report recommendations.

The report recommendations reflect robust, cost-effective, and practical next steps. When implemented, the recommendations will help to achieve increased administrative efficiency, improved program quality, and improved experiences for the families and children seeking or receiving services. In the long term, the recommendations will increase transparency to the legislature, improve access to home visiting programs for families, and foster meaningful collaboration across home visiting programs.

S.B. 925 would put a Home Visitation Program Consortium into statute. The bill language, as written, has staff and fiscal implications. Due to the projected significant budget deficit in the current fiscal year, all state agencies have been instructed to achieve lapses in their personal services line item. The language, as drafted, would be administratively burdensome and impede

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the ability to achieve the needed lapses goal. Looking at the budget for the next two years, agencies will be asked to achieve even greater personal service lapses, hindering the Office of Early Childhood to comply adequately with the requirements of the Home Visiting Consortium as written. In addition, we have concerns regarding the use of the term “oversee” in the bill when describing the role of the Consortium in implementing recommendations, and believe that an advisory role is more in line with similarly created groups. The Office of Early Childhood would be happy to work with the Committee on Children on language modifications.

Before closing, I want to share news that last week Connecticut was awarded \$10.4 million in federal grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. These funds will allow Connecticut to expand voluntary evidence-based home visiting services to 2,600 additional families over two and a half years funded by the grant.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I would be happy to take any questions.