

March 2, 2015

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON PROPOSED H.B. 6004: "AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVES"

Esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Jordana Frost and I am a resident of Mansfield, CT and an active member of Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC).

I urge you to **restore the Community Plans for Early Childhood line item in the budget**, and ask you to **support H.B. 6004: "An Act concerning Local Early Childhood Collaboratives"**

H.B. 6004 strengthens the link between the Office of Early Childhood and local collaboratives, ensuring a more integrated approach to improving the health, wellbeing, and learning success of young children, while promoting local engagement of leaders and families, reducing wasteful management of resources, and building upon state-local synergies and partnerships.

Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC) is just one of the many local collaboratives supported by the Community Plans for Early Childhood line item in the budget of the Office of Early Childhood. The state funds, together with matching funds from our partner, the Graustein Memorial Fund, and matching resources provided by our local town administration have allowed our community to continue advocating for important projects and programs affecting local families with young children.

For example, MAC has been instrumental in developing the local Mansfield Plan for Young Children, which has brought together stakeholders from different sectors in the community to identify a data-driven approach to continue improving the health, academic success, and community connectedness of our children and their families. As a result of the priorities identified in the plan, MAC has been able to engage local community members in advocacy activities that have resulted in additional funding sources that will contribute to the development of a local community-designed and community-built, highly accessible playground, as well as the expansion of safe walking opportunities through the extension of a sidewalk connecting the library to a local neighborhood school. MAC members have also partnered with local schools, library, health district, and community center, to ensure that programs and initiatives developed in the town continue promoting an integrated approach focused on building a culture of health and wellbeing through active living and healthy eating.

While a relatively small line item in the overall state budget, the impact at the local level is invaluable and helps magnify the important work being advanced by state agencies. Please restore the Community Plans for Early Childhood line item in the budget and support H.B. 6004: "An Act concerning Local Early Childhood Collaboratives."

Respectfully submitted,

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