

Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

March 2, 2015

RE: Proposed Funding Elimination
Community Plans for Early Childhood and Improving Early Literacy Grants

To the Members of the Appropriations Committee:

When it comes to enabling Colchester's youngest citizens to develop the skills needed for a productive and successful life, we know that early intervention works. Our own local data and research has proven that investing early in children's education and development puts them on a path toward success that they may otherwise miss.

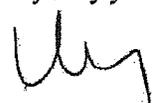
Key to our local approach to early intervention efforts has been the Collaborative for Colchester's Children ("C3"), a local early childhood council created specifically to develop a plan for fostering Happy, Healthy, and Successful children. Since its founding in 2008, C3 has been strong and incredibly productive. As a direct result C3's efforts, Colchester's children are entering kindergarten better prepared than they were 5 years ago. In 2009, 40% of children entered preschool with reading scores that met local Benchmark standards. Last year, 73% of children met those standards. Nearly 90% of our children enter kindergarten with pre-K school experience. Families across our community have been empowered with supports and resources, including a local bookmobile and Play-and Learn groups that provide opportunities for early literacy and math skill development. C3 has also provided resources to local private daycare centers, helping to ensure that quality preschool is available across our community.

Even more fundamentally, C3 has successfully broken down artificial barriers that often exist that prevent comprehensive approaches to early childhood efforts. C3 has built an incredible network of stakeholders who regularly come together to focus on nothing but the success of all of our children. We can confidently and proudly say that Colchester is a better community for children because of our collective work.

The budget proposal now before the Legislature poses a grave threat to our efforts. The proposal eliminates funding for the "Community Plans for Early Childhood" and Improving Early Literacy" grants, both of which provide substantial support to our local programs. The State funding cut will have even greater impact, as private funding (that provides more than an additional dollar for every dollar of State funding) will be lost if the State end its commitment to early childhood. Without these two sources of funding, C3 – and the impact it is having – will be severely, if not completely, compromised.

We respectfully request restoration of the "Community Plans for Early Childhood" and Improving Early Literacy" grants so that the success we have realized here in Colchester, and that no doubt others are realizing statewide, can be sustained. Early intervention works. A relatively small investment now will pay tremendous dividends later.

Very truly yours,


Stan Soby
First Selectman


Rob Tarlov
Chair, Board of Finance


Ronald Goldstein
Chair, Board of Education



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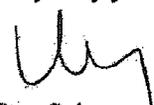
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