

March 2, 2015

Written Testimony of Jondahl Koonankeil for Support of Bill 6824

Please accept this written testimony as a **request for your support for Bill 6824 for the support of local Early Childhood Councils**. The local Early Childhood Council in Colchester, CT has developed and implemented a high functioning network of programming through the Collaborative for Colchester's Children (C3) which focuses on children in their infant, toddler and preschool years. I believe this programming is crucial for the long term development of kids in our community.

I moved to Colchester before having children and without much knowledge as to what to look for in education, especially in the preschool years. Now, as a mother of three children ages 6, 4 and 2, I personally welcome any development and educational activities that may help me through these extremely gratifying but highly challenging years. It has been particularly satisfying to have these activities offered right here in Colchester and even more importantly, these Parenting Workshops and Play & Learn Groups have been key to my family personally connecting and building strong networks with other families in the community.

I was able to participate in a C3 Parenting Workshop (childcare provided by C3) focusing on emotion/discipline when my then kindergartner was going through a very trying transition to full day elementary school. This program was extremely beneficial in teaching me how to handle her extreme emotions/behaviors and upon reflection I would encourage this Parenting Workshop be offered to the entire community of parents of any incoming kindergartners. My children and I have also participated together in Play & Learn Groups such as, Family Yoga, Power Play and Joyful Noises. Each of these programs offered specific ways for my children to learn how to function productively in a group as well as develop them as an individual.

I believe that all three of my children have benefited through my participation in Parenting Workshops and I feel strongly the Play & Learn Groups have prepared my 4 and 2 year old to a higher degree for kindergarten and beyond. I'm sorry my 6 year old was not of the age to participate when I discovered C3. These types of programs are not offered anywhere else in Colchester and by providing them free of charge, my family and many others have been able to take advantage of the benefits these programs provide. I truly believe when parents are supported and empowered, children thrive.

I am asking that the **funding be restored for the Community Plans for Early Childhood (\$750,000) and Improving Early Literacy (\$150,000)**. Private funders will match this money and so the benefit is doubled. Without state resources those private matching dollars are lost! Although I speak on behalf of Colchester, there are forty-one communities across the state that benefit from this funding. This is an extremely smart investment in the families and children of Connecticut. Connecticut certainly needs it. But that's another letter.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

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