

WILLIAM CASPAR GRAUSTEIN  
M E M O R I A L F U N D

To: Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly  
March 3, 2015

From: David Addams, Executive Director  
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**Testimony re: HB 6824 An Act Concerning the State Budget**

Co-chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present on behalf of programs that have been co-funded by the Graustein Memorial Fund and the State over the past half dozen years. The Memorial Fund remains committed to **match state funding** for these initiatives:

*The storyteller figure symbolizes the values of the Memorial Fund—educating, supporting and inspiring our children.*

- For **community local early childhood councils, State funding of \$900,000 would be matched by \$800,000 from the Memorial Fund and \$200,000 from the Children's Fund of Connecticut.** *Beyond the grant dollars, the Children's Fund and the Memorial Fund provide the councils in 41 communities with technical assistance and training on results based accountability, planning, collective impact, early literacy, health, and other strategies.*
- For **early literacy initiatives, State funding of \$150,000 would be matched by \$175,000** from the Memorial Fund. The work of 6 early literacy initiatives has included, for example: *Bridgeport, Colchester, Torrington and Middletown focused their efforts on school readiness and the transition to kindergarten; New Haven piloted a dual language-learning program in two Head Start classrooms; and New Britain expanded its work on chronic absence to community and school-based pre-school programs.*
- For **parent leadership training, State funding of \$500,000 for the Parent Trust Fund would be matched by \$250,000 from the Memorial Fund.** *Including local dollars, this means that the state funding is matched by \$625,000. In the last year, the Parent Leadership Fund has supported 25 organizations across Connecticut to train 66 cohorts of parents.*

Without the total funding from all partners this work on behalf of young children and their families in Connecticut communities will flounder. We ask that you restore funding for the local early childhood councils and early literacy initiatives to the budget of the Office of Early Childhood, and that you restore funding for the Parent Trust Fund to the budget of the State Department of Education.

**Local Early Childhood Councils bring together key people in a community –** parents, providers, schools, health practitioners and others – to identify issues and then weave together the supports and services required for young children to become successful. **They add critical local expertise to the state system, as described in the 2014 legislation creating the Office of Early Childhood.**

The Local Early Childhood Councils (LECCs) make possible:

***Healthy Children Thriving in Schools***

*LECCs provide the structure communities need to share data, resources and best practices in order to provide all children with opportunities that help to close our state's "achievement gap."*

***Families Engaged and Connected to Resources***

*LECCs ensure that parents are included as equal partners in the community decision-making process and serve as a hub connecting families to local resources that support the healthy development of their children.*

***Results-Oriented Collaboration Making Better Decisions***

*LECCs function as the local arm of the early childhood system, collecting data about children's well-being and implementing data-driven strategies to address local issues to ensure children enter school ready to succeed.*

***Local Resources Maximized***

*LECCs create alignment across sectors resulting in efficiencies that reduce the duplication of services, making the most of local and state resources and mobilizing networks among all stakeholders.*

***New and Expanded Funding Leveraged***

*LECCs attract funds from private and corporate foundations such as Grossman, Vikings, Legos and Walmart, and recently collaborated with the Office of Early Childhood to help secure a \$12.5 million federal grant to expand high-quality preschool in fourteen communities.*

**The Parent Trust Fund was created by the General Assembly in 2001 to train parents in leadership skills that improve health, safety and learning outcomes for children.** The Trust Fund supports programs like People Empowering People (PEP), Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (Parents SEE), Voices for Families, and ASPIRA-APEX. With this training, parents have contributed over 15,000 volunteer hours per year and now serve on school, district, regional and state committees and boards.

We know that this is a particularly difficult fiscal year. However, we believe that by working together we can continue to improve the lives of young children and families in Connecticut.

Thank you.