

March 3, 2015

To Senator Bye and Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Edie Reichard and I am the director of Sleeping Giant Day Care, Inc. in Hamden that serves 30 working families and children ages 3 to 5 years old. We have 8 full time staff. We are a State Funded Center and have been in business for 36 years. State Funded Child Development Centers were established by law in Connecticut over 40 years ago and charged with providing high quality affordable child care and early learning to low and moderate income working families. There are approximately 102 State Funded Child Development Centers in Connecticut serving over 4000 children, with about 1200 infant/toddler children served. These centers also have after school programs for children in grade school. We are the support that keeps parents working and a critical component of the economy.

The Governor's budget cuts funding for the school age portion of our state grant by over \$800,000.00. This leaves centers with a gaping hole and working parents/families with few alternative options for after school child care. For years families have relied on our programs and this cut seems arbitrary and against the vision of state policy to support working families.

State Funded Centers advocated for the new Office of Early Childhood and supported its mission "to coordinate and improve the delivery of early childhood services". The proposed cut neither leads to better coordination nor improved services. Our families usually have more than one child in our programs with an age range from birth to school age. This cut forces a parent to find affordable child care for a school age child somewhere else and makes it more difficult and stressful for working parents.

We urge the Committee to restore this drastic cut to our already underfunded small businesses to ensure families have accessible, affordable, high quality child care for all their children. Given the budget difficulties, I suggest the Committee consider repurposing dollars from proposed expansion of School Readiness slots and restore cuts to school age child care. This reallocation will not add dollars to the budget, but demonstrate sound fiscal policy.

I appreciate the funding in the budget for the State Funded Centers and thank you for your long standing commitment to early childhood. Thank you for reading this testimony.

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