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Office of Early Childhood and
Department of Education Budget
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Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening.

My name is John Cattelan and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The Alliance represents 23 YMCAs across the state of Connecticut.

While Connecticut's YMCAs are generally supportive of the Governor's proposals to maintain funding for School Readiness and Care4Kids, we still have concerns with regards to these programs and the proposed reductions in other programs that impact children and the Ys early childhood programs.

Last year's increase in funding for School Readiness and Care4Kids was the first increase in a number of years, but the increase in the minimum wage and other general cost increases consumed the enhanced funding.

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While we support the addition of new pre-school slots, it is also imperative to recognize that current slots need to be fully funded as well. The current funding levels impact the Ys ability to maintain the required staff education levels, program quality and support to many of our children and families.

We are very concerned about the proposed budget decrease for School Readiness Quality Enhancement. Connecticut's YMCAs use a majority of funds for professional development via local School Readiness Councils. If our Ys needed to pay for training it would harm our ability to provide services and programs, along with offering financial assistance.

We are extremely concerned about the proposed reduction in funding for the After School Program. Just a quick example of the impact of this reduction, our YMCAs in Bridgeport would see a decrease of over \$100,000. As many of you are aware, this would also impact some of the summer programs we offer to continue summer learning.

I am positive most of the members of this Committee are aware of the evidence that supports early childhood education. YMCAs across Connecticut exist to strengthen our communities and every day work with thousands of children, women and men to ensure everyone regardless of age, income or background – has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.