

Testimony for Tuesday March 3, 2015 **Appropriations Committee Public Hearing re Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget**

To Senator Bye, Rep. Minnie Gonzalez and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Gail Nolan, Co-chair of the Early Childhood Alliance. I would like to support reinstating several cuts in the Governor's Budget. The Parent Trust Fund, Community Plans for Early Childhood, and the School Readiness Quality Enhancement Grant are programs that are vital in Bloomfield.

Parent Trust Fund: Research shows that parent involvement has a significant positive impact on child outcomes. The Trust prepares parents to work with school, community and state leaders to improve health, safety and learning outcomes for all children. More than 1100 parents and their children are served annually. Each of these training graduates leaves better prepared to advocate for their children, volunteer in their community, serve on non-profit boards, lead parent-teacher associations or run for public office. By mentoring and empowering parents, the Trust's programs create ripple effects on family, local and state levels. We are not able to do these trainings locally without help of the Parent Trust Fund. With this help we are able to leverage local money and in kind resources to make the trainings possible. Future leaders will not get the trainings to have the confidence they need to do great things if this funding is not preserved. In Bloomfield we have a backpack program that started a few years ago after one of the Parent See Trainings. One of the members did the initial program as a project for the class and has continued it with her family foundation in Bloomfield ever since. This program helps over a hundred families have nutritious meals over the weekend every week during the school year.

Community Plans for Early childhood: The state matching money paired with the Graustein Memorial Fund money has also had a great impact in Bloomfield. In Bloomfield, I am involved in The Alliance for Bloomfield's Children, which is a combination of the Discovery, School Readiness and Family Resource Center Councils. We have a large membership which includes town departments, local stakeholders, parents and anyone interested in connecting families and community. We work together to improve the lives of family and strive to ensure- *All Bloomfield's children birth - 8 are healthy, educated, nurtured & supported by their families and their communities.* Without the state money, we would not have the support of our coordinator who glues all of the members together. We would be left with silos of departments and community folks whose voices would not be heard in one supportive place. It takes a village to raise a child, but that village needs support to coordinate it's members into the most effective group it can be.

School Readiness Quality Enhancement money in Bloomfield is small. We receive \$8,035 to help increase quality. Since we are a small community we use the bulk of the money towards the School Readiness Centers to increase trainings and programs at the centers. We also put some of the money towards sending parents and home childcare providers for a conference training and

the rest towards 2 collaborative events in town aimed at giving children and families' exposure to positive activities for families to take part in. By coming together with other groups, we make every dollar stretch to benefit the maximum number of families. When this money is cut even a little bit, it hurts the programs meant to help families.

Thank you for listening and supporting these programs,

Gail Nolan, Director

Laurel Family Resource Center & Bloomfield School Readiness

1 Filley Street

Bloomfield, CT 06002