

Testimony of Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives, EASTCONN on Raised House Bill 7020: An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators and Initiatives.

To the chairpersons and members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to supporting and expanding high quality preschool in our state.

I would like to make several comments and recommendations on Raised House Bill 7020: An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators and Initiatives.

Please support regional/local Councils with broad-based representation especially parents. Councils can play a vital role to community engagement in early care and education. Especially in regions with towns that have small populations which lack community resources and area foundations; state funding is important to their effective functioning.

While I appreciate the desire to collect more data on bachelor's degree programs in early childhood education or childhood development to conduct a trend analysis, I must voice my **strong support of the Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC)**. While it may be difficult to recruit and retain teachers at this time, this Credential is critical to ensure professional preparation consistent with state expectations for highly qualified teachers. In addition, the ECTC provides a transcript and portfolio review process for those applicants that may have received training at institutions of higher education that are not approved.

The development of the ECTC started in 2005 and involved many stakeholders over the years. Two and four year institutions of higher education are committed to providing consistency by using common standards for teacher preparation as demonstrated by the number currently approved and others in the queue for approval. It was intended that the ECTC, which parallels teacher preparation for educator certification, would lead to higher, comparable salaries for teachers in non-public school settings. Without this similar process, it will be hard to advocate for increased funding for comparable wages. We must stop subsidizing quality care on the backs of early childhood staff and need the credential to do so. A bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution will not have the same level of credibility.

We have made good progress in developing the skills and qualifications of our workforce and must continue to do so. Brain research and the importance of intervention in the early years continue to be substantiated. The often cited long term benefits from the Perry Preschool Project had certified teachers with extensive professional development.

We owe our young children no less than to provide them with highly qualified staff.