

## **HB 7020 AAC Early Childhood Educators and Initiatives**

### **Connecticut General Assembly**

#### **Testimony for the Education Committee**

**19 March, 2015**

Good Afternoon. My name is Kathy Queen, Co-Chair of the State Funded Child Development Centers Directors Forum and retiring Director of Wallingford Community Day Care Center. I am here today to testify regarding House Bill 7020, An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators and Initiatives.

State Funded Child Development Centers were established in 1968 by state statute to provide high quality child care for low income working families in approximately 63 cities and towns in CT. Bolstered by state grants, and municipal partnerships, we serve over 4000 children birth through school age. Many centers participate in the State School Readiness Program and over the years benefited from the CHEFA loan program to build and renovate our child development centers. We are a critical component of the early care and education system in Connecticut.

My comments are related to Section 5 containing staff qualification for teachers in publicly funded early care and education programs.

#### **Recommendation:**

- Accept teaching degrees from regionally accredited institutions of higher education and or programs that are NCATE/NAEYC approved.
- Grandfather teachers with an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood who have been teaching for 20 years as deemed eligible to be a Qualified Staff Member.

Currently, only teachers graduating from ECTC approved Colleges are eligible to teach in publicly funded programs including infant toddler and preschool teachers. (PA 14-39)

*Currently, there are only 14 approved ECTC approved colleges in Connecticut.*

*Nine of which are for Associates Degrees including Gateway, Housatonic, Tunxis, Goodwin, Capital, Naugatuck, Norwalk, Quinebaug and Three Rivers; and Goodwin, Post, Charter Oak, UConn, ECSU for Bachelor Degrees. ECTC for infant toddler teachers is a smaller pool including only six approved colleges, five for Associates and only one at UConn for a Bachelor Degree.*

This process limits the pool of qualified teachers and exacerbates the already difficult task of hiring teachers with a BA when compensation is stagnate and well below comparable positions in the public school system. *Example: If a teacher graduates from St. Josephs College with a Degree in Early Childhood, they would have to go through a review process and not automatically be accepted. As a Director I now have to say to this highly qualified person, I can hire you conditionally and give you low wages and by the way you now have to go through an*

*approval process to see if your course of studies is acceptable to OEC. This is not a rationale process.*

The state process is redundant and acts as a barrier for hiring qualified staff from prestigious colleges like Bank Street, Columbia, Wheelock or St. Joseph College and many more private and public institutions. The bill before you does nothing to address the crisis situation facing publicly funded centers. Regionally Accredited institutions of higher education meet high standards for course of study and many colleges go on to get NCATE/NAEYC approval. The ECTC process creates an unnecessary bureaucratic level to the early care and education system and does nothing to address the needs of teachers and programs in the real world.

State Funded Child Development Centers embrace high standards, teacher qualifications and all the components of a high quality system. Recent public policies promote investment in pre-K in the public sector: Alliance Districts, Smart Start, Charter Schools and Magnate Schools -vital investments. But without comparable financial support for child care centers to pay our teachers that provide full year, full day services to children birth to school age, the child care industry cannot compete with these free programs in the public school settings. Reimbursement rates would have to climb to at least \$11,000 per slot to keep up with inflation.

We ask that you review the current system for teacher approval and provide flexibility and a more stream lined approach to staff qualifications that opens up the pool of teachers rather than the current restrictive system in place. I have submitted language to amend PA 14-39 for your review.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendation.