

Testimony Supporting House Bill 7020: An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators and Initiatives

Sarah Iverson and Cyd Oppenheimer, J.D.

Education Committee

March 19, 2015

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

I am a Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that promotes the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

On behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children I am testifying in **support of H.B. 7020: An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators and Initiatives**. H.B. 7020 requires preschool programs offered by charter and magnet schools to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the same standard to which School Readiness preschool programs and state-funded Child Development Center preschool programs are held.

By requiring uniform accreditation standards in preschool programs across Connecticut, H.B. 7020 takes steps toward ensuring that our state's programs provide the best learning experience for children and their educators by meeting national standards of quality.¹ Research shows that the multiple long-term benefits reaped by early care and education are only realized if programs are of high-quality.² Children attending high-quality preschool programs make cognitive, behavioral, and emotional gains that last well beyond the earliest years.³

Requiring uniform accreditation standards also takes steps toward building a comprehensive early childhood system capable of meeting the needs of all young children and families effectively and efficiently. National research shows that fragmented early care and education delivery systems "limit effectiveness in delivering a seamless continuum of services to children and families," and cause "undue inconvenience" for children and families.⁴ In particular, by requiring uniform standards for early learning that are high-quality and developmentally appropriate, H.B. 7020 re-affirms one of the eight fundamental elements of a successful early childhood system, as identified through extensive research and input from Connecticut's early care and education community.⁵

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or any other staff members with any questions.

Thank you,

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¹ For more information on NAEYC accreditation standards, see "NAEYC Accreditation Systems," National Association for the Education of Young Children, available at <http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation>.

² See Espinosa, Linda M., “High-Quality Preschool: Why We Need It and What it Looks Like,” National Institute for Early Education Research (November 2002), available at <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/1.pdf>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See Julia Coffman, Kathy Glazer, Susan Hibbard, and Kristin Wiggins, “Early Childhood System Governance: Lessons from State Experiences,” BUILD (November 2010) on pg. 11.

⁵ The eight fundamental elements of a successful early childhood system were determined through collaborative research and discussion between Connecticut Voices for Children, the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Connecticut Parent Power, and the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). *For more information, see* Oppenheimer, Cyd, Kramer, Tamara, and Joseph Edie, “Connecticut Early Care and Education Progress Report, 2013,” Connecticut Voices for Children (January 2014), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/ece13progressreport.pdf>, page 19-20.