



Testimony before the Educations Committee Regarding  
H.B. No. 7020, *An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators and Initiatives* and S.B.  
1099, *An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Commission to Develop a Vision and  
Strategic Plan for the Connecticut Education System*  
Submitted by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving  
March 19, 2015

**Board of Directors**

Yvette Meléndez, Chair  
Bonnie J. Malley, Vice Chair  
Robert B. Goldfarb, Treasurer  
Nancy P. Bernstein  
David M. Borden  
Thea Montañez  
Rodney O. Powell  
JoAnn H. Price  
Theodore S. Sergi

**President**

Linda J. Kelly

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

**The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving** is the community foundation for the 29-  
town Greater Hartford region with the mission to put philanthropy into action to create  
lasting solutions that result in vibrant communities within our region. In 2014, the Foundation approved  
grants totaling nearly \$9.4 million in strategic investments to support education in our region and more  
than \$7.3 million to support family and social services that promote the conditions for educational and life  
success. These investments support our goal to ensure that every child in the Greater Hartford region  
enters kindergarten ready to learn and graduates from high school prepared to succeed.

**The Hartford Foundation supports H.B. 7020 and S.B. 1099 as critical building blocks to realize the  
school and life success for every child in our state. Yet, the vision and planning for Connecticut's  
early childhood and K-12 system must also be supported by making education our top budgetary  
and policy priority.**

**The Hartford Foundation supports H.B. 7020 as an important component in building a high-quality  
early childhood system in Connecticut. Specifically, we support the proposals that:**

- Require the Department of Education assists in the implementation of a statewide developmentally appropriate kindergarten assessment tool.
- Require local and regional boards of education and preschool programs that receive state or federal funding to participate in the statewide public school information system including reporting on student experiences in preschool.
- Require preschool programs offered by magnet and charter schools be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Require the Office of Early Childhood to collaborate with and provide funding to local and regional early childhood councils.

**We offer the following additional comments and recommendations regarding the proposed bill:**

- **Children's readiness for kindergarten begins in their homes and neighborhoods, long before they step into the kindergarten classroom. As a result, the implementation of a statewide kindergarten assessment tool should reflect both where children live and where they go to school.** Because families and communities are the first learning environment, the kindergarten assessment tool should help educators and policymakers understand data in the context of neighborhoods, socioeconomic and community resources. Our investment in piloting the Early Development Instrument (EDI) in Hartford and West Hartford demonstrates the value in looking at the school readiness of a whole population of children in a neighborhood.

- **Building a high-quality statewide early childhood system requires sustained funding to and collaboration with local and regional early childhood**

10 Columbus Boulevard, 8th Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106

860-548-1888  
fax 860-524-8346  
www.hfpg.org

**councils.** These entities are a long-standing example of private-public partnership, parent leadership development and the breeding ground for local early childhood governance and innovation that can inform state early childhood system building. In addition, the councils bring new national philanthropic and federal dollars to Connecticut. The Hartford Foundation has worked with local collaboratives in our region as critical vehicles to pilot innovations in early childhood, family support and family engagement.

**The Hartford Foundation supports S.B. 1099 as an important step toward creating a holistic vision for school and life success for every child in Connecticut and recommends the following:**

- **We urge the Committee to retain the proposed inclusive membership for the Planning Commission for Education** which brings the voice and experience of parents, students, early childhood and K-12 educators and individuals with knowledge and experience in systems building, equity, access and quality of education, the arts and the socio-emotional needs of students.
- **We recommend that the Commission membership include individuals who have knowledge and experience of community based programs and school-family-community partnership.**
- **We recommend that the Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood serve as an ex-officio nonvoting member of the Commission.**

These recommendations are grounded in our investments and our work with our partners in the Hartford region where we have learned that education leadership includes (1) creating and sustaining conditions that enable family, school and community partnership for student learning and success; (2) ensuring that every child has equitable access to an array of academic and developmental supports both in and outside of school; and (3) providing high quality, coordinated and holistic supports must begin at birth and continue through high school graduation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.