



ALL OUR KIN INC.

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

**Testimony of Christina Nelson: SB 321
Early Childhood Policy Fellow, All Our Kin
Before the Committee on Children
February 17, 2015**

Good afternoon, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Christina Nelson, and I am a Policy Fellow at All Our Kin. We are a nationally-recognized, Connecticut-based nonprofit that trains and supports family child care providers. I'm here today to testify in support of Senate Bill Number 321, AN ACT CONCERNING AN INFANT AND TODDLER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

All parents want the best for their children. Unfortunately, not all parents have access to the information and resources they need to help their children flourish. At All Our Kin, we work with family child care providers to increase the quality of their child care programs, but we are also invested in helping families gain access to critical information about health and development so that their children can thrive at home. By establishing an educational program for parents of infants and toddlers, Senate Bill 321 represents an important step towards this goal.

We at All Our Kin are especially excited about the possibility outlined by the office of the Mayor of New Haven, in which community parents would be given training on infant-toddler development and education so that they could disseminate this information with their peers in an informal, unstructured manner. Furthermore, we believe that family child care providers would excel in such Parent Educator positions because of the strong relationships that they already have with other community parents. Family child care providers are a critical component of Connecticut's child care landscape, especially for infants and toddlers: preliminary research conducted at All Our Kin's last annual family child care conference suggests that around a third of the children in their care are under 2 years old, and almost two thirds are under 3 years old.

Family child care providers are uniquely positioned to serve as Parent Educators. They live and work in the same neighborhood as the parents they serve, giving them a strong neighborhood presence. They often speak the same language and share the same cultural background as the families they serve. Many are parents themselves, and have years of experience working directly with very young children. Finally, research shows that parents trust their advice on child development. In 2012, Lauren Graber, a doctoral student at the Yale University School of

Medicine, published original research on family child care providers' potential as health and development educators in low-income communities. She found that parents greatly value the health and development advice that they receive from their family child care providers. Parents in Graber's study saw their child care providers as an extended part of the family support system with special insight into the health, development, behavior and learning of their children. Many parents even reported that they considered their child care provider's advice more relevant than their health care provider's advice because of the substantial amount of time that child care providers spend with the children in their programs.

We sincerely hope that the Committee invests in parents and communities by moving forward on this bill and considering the potential of family child care providers in the plan for an infant-toddler development education program for parents.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.