

Good morning members of the committee and thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. I would especially like to thank Representative Candelaria for his leadership in raising this very important bill that is aimed at keeping all children in Connecticut's learning and childcare facilities safe. My name is Georgia Goldburn and I am the Director of Hope For New Haven. Hope For New Haven is a Christian-based non-profit that operates a child development center in New Haven that serves 83 infants, toddlers, preschool and school aged children year round. Our center is located at 1 Long Wharf Drive in New Haven in a facility that spans two neighborhoods - Long Wharf and the Hill.

On December 12, 2014, a shooting occurred near the bus stop by the old Gateway Community College building on Sargent Drive in New Haven at 10:20 a.m. According to New Haven police, the shooting involved people in two different cars firing multiple gunshots at each other. The driver of one of the cars, who was shot in the head, vacated his vehicle and collapsed at the scene. After the victim got out of the car, a female passenger, got behind the wheel and drove to Vernon Street in the Hill. The driver of the other car sped off and was chased by a cop working extra-duty in the area, who had heard the gunfire and called it in. The chase, which began at Long Wharf, coursed through the Hill neighborhood where the driver who had also been shot, crashed his car on Howard Avenue at Second Street. He fled the scene, broke into an empty nearby one-family home and hid. This resulted in a police standoff and after several hours, they successfully coaxed him out of the home and to the hospital.

Three public schools in the vicinity, Betsey Ross Magnet, Hill Central and Clemente Leadership Academy, went into lockdown. Also within the vicinity were 2 childcare centers, including Hope Child Development Center and 8 family daycare providers. None of our facilities were notified of the incident. The shoot-out occurred at the entry way to our facility, the high speed chase wrapped around to the back of our facility and the ensuing standoff took place on Second & Howard Ave, immediately behind our facility and two blocks down from two licensed family daycare providers. But no one in our Center had any idea of what was occurring.

Additionally, the incident occurred at the time when our Center staff are schedule to take children outside to play. In addition to our playground, which is located on the 1 Long Wharf property, we regularly use the two public parks that are located on Sargent Drive and on the corner of First Street. In the event that our staff had ventured out on that fateful morning to either parks, they would have found themselves in the middle of a high speed chase and/or a police standoff. There are over 60,000 children in Connecticut that are being cared for daily in childcare centers, group homes and family daycares. Directors, like myself, have the same sacred trust as school administrators – keeping children safe. Only, we are not equipped with the requisite resources and information to execute that sacred charge.

The staff of Hope Child Development Center, along with the other childcare facilities should have been notified of this emergency that was unfolding in our backyards and our facilities should have been placed on lock down along

with those three schools. We were instead being provided with piecemeal and inaccurate information by panicking parents who were hearing the reports of the shooting through the local news media. Thankfully none of our staff decided to visit the park on that fateful morning. But in the age of Sandy Hook, I believe no child's fate, whether they are being cared for in a school or childcare facility, should be left to chance or the luck of the draw. In its recommendation, the Sandy Hook Commission talked about the importance of situational awareness, as a means to keep children safe. The concept is that people cannot react to what we they are unaware of. Our Center, along with the nine other facilities, did not have the information to act to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children that we were charged to protect on that day. This bill would change that.

With this proposal, there will undoubtedly be questions about the cost and mechanism through which to identify and notify facilities that may be impacted by such emergencies. The good news for Connecticut and for the legislature is that the infrastructure for notifying licensed childcare facilities currently exists through Infoline and would require no additional funding by either state or local municipalities to implement. The local or state police can simply notify Infoline, who maintains an up to date database of contact information for license childcare facilities. Infoline will in turn notify all the programs within the affected area.

I urge the committee to adopt this bill. I further urge the committee to ensure that the current infrastructure which exists through Infoline be the mechanism through which state and local authorities notify childcare centers, group home, licensed family daycare providers in the event of emergency conditions near our facilities that may endanger the safety and welfare of our children.