

Testimony

RE: Bill 5306 An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood
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Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

I am Carol Annette and I am currently the facilitator for the AFP project in the South Central region of the state. I have been with the project since November of 1998 and have been lucky to be part of the success that child care centers have experienced while preparing for NAEYC accreditation. Please accept this testimony in regards to HB5306. I am asking you to reject the proposed change to the language regarding the regional Accreditation Facilitation Projects. The language we object to is as follows: “Sec. 6. Section 17b-749e of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2016*):

The Office of Early Childhood shall, **[establish and fund five regional accreditation projects, within available appropriations. The office shall select qualified applicants for each region through a request for proposal process. The office shall give priority to child day care facilities where at least twenty per cent of the children live with families earning less than seventy-five per cent of the state median income level]** within available appropriations, support programs providing child care services to achieve accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The office shall set priorities for receipt of support under this section.”

Gateway Community College has held the regional Accreditation Facilitation Project grant since the project went statewide with 153 total participants. The impact of this project on the community is apparent by a review of the data that shows that 111 project participants have become accredited and 25 are currently seeking accreditation. Service to the community is a core mission of the College. The vision, mission and philosophy of the Early Childhood Education Program at Gateway encompasses maintaining its role in the community and responding to community and workforce needs. The relationship among the College, the Early Childhood Education Program and the AFP has been very strong.

The AFP has operated successfully as a statewide project with regional hubs. Programs in each region work together as a cohort with the regional facilitator and can avail themselves of individual supports and workshops that are free to the Early Childhood Community. The facilitator in each region has expertise in Early Childhood education and program management while maintaining an up to date knowledge of the steps and

process of the NAEYC Accreditation system. This model of support has provided CT with the 3rd largest number of NAEYC accredited programs in the country. Having a regional presence in the state allows facilitators to develop relationships with programs. This has been used as a recruiting tool for programs new to the NAEYC process and also as a mentoring process for programs that are working to maintain their NAEYC accreditation. While programs that receive state funding are mandated to achieve NAEYC Accreditation, the AFP has also been able to successfully support those programs that are not mandated by state regulation and come to the process voluntarily. All children, whether in state funded programs or not deserve the best quality of care and experiences that is available to them. The AFP has been one of the few opportunities that non-funded programs can access when working towards providing quality care.

With Deb Flis as the statewide director, the AFP has been recognized nationally as a high functioning project that gets results. Over the years, NAEYC has requested that the CT AFP pilot their system before it became fully functional, and engage in conversation with them around potential standards. Just this month the NAEYC Academy asked if CT would be the spotlight of the monthly conference call. By dismantling the AFP as proposed in the legislation, programs in CT. will be losing the support of a coordinated group of experienced and knowledgeable facilitators.

If quality environments and experiences for all children in all settings is the goal of the OEC, I urge you to reject the language change that would dismantle the regional project and potentially water down the services provided.