

Testimony before the Education Committee on H.B 5306, An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood
Submitted by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
February 24, 2016

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

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. We focus on funding and other support to projects, organizations and collaborations that show promise of substantial and sustainable community benefit in our region. **As you consider new language proposed in H.B. 5306, Sec. 6., we urge you to reflect on the lessons learned over the past seventeen years from the current, regionally-based Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP).** The AFP provides critical support to early care and education programs seeking accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and promotes high-quality early childhood system building.

In the early 1990s, the Hartford Foundation seeded a pilot of the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP), which was designed and implemented by the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative, a project of the Foundation, and the Hartford Association for the Education of Young Children. The AFP was included in Connecticut's 1997 School Readiness bill, and since that time, **over 400 center-based programs have received accreditation with regionally-based support from the AFP, and more than 80 programs are currently in the pipeline for accreditation or renewals.** The success of the AFP has resulted in Connecticut ranking third in the nation for the number of NAEYC accredited early care and education centers.

Through our early childhood investments and learning with our partners, the Hartford Foundation has identified critical components for ongoing accreditation support in Connecticut including:

- **Program Quality Matters** – High-quality early care and education – with staff and learning environments that meet rigorous state and national standards -- has long been demonstrated as an essential investment in children's healthy development and school readiness.
- **Regional Networks Are Vital To Build and Sustain A Strong Statewide Early Childhood System** – Regional support to early care and education providers enables training and technical assistance that are responsive to local needs, improves access to quality improvement and accreditation resources and supports for local providers, and has the potential to best serve under-resourced providers of home based child care.
- **Relationships and Continuity of Services Facilitate Quality** – The regionally based AFP has trusted relationships with, and specialized knowledge of, local providers and networks. Changes to the current AFP program should build on these relationships and include existing highly qualified AFP consultants to encourage programs to continue the challenging work related to quality improvement and accreditation.

We welcome the Committee to contact Richard Sussman, Director of Early Childhood Investments (rsussman@hfpg.org), for further information about the Foundation's work and learning related to the AFP and early childhood system-building at the local and state levels.

Thank you for your consideration.