

Testimony on HB 5044

Office of Early Childhood Budget

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Members of the Committee:

Hello, my name is Mary Cecchinato, the Executive Director of the Torrington Child Care Center Inc., in Torrington, CT. First, I would like to remark on the Governor's proposed budget. I am opposed to the concept of block grants to state agencies. This approach gives too much power to state bureaucracy, leaves programs, families and teachers with no idea of funding and can jeopardize the continuity of care. Child care centers are small businesses that contribute to the overall economy and are a vital "infrastructure" to Connecticut's economy. If the state goes to block grants, it could result in unintentional consequences for programs. Research is clear that lost hours for unreliable child care have a negative impact on the economy

State funded child development centers were created in 1968 to help middle and low income working families afford a quality program. The Torrington Child Care Center has been in operation since 1979. I have been Director for 30 years. We use a sliding fee scale, which helps parents with affordable care, so they can continue to work. Over the years more and more regulations have been put in place with no increase in funding to help fulfill the new demands put upon child care centers. By 2020, we are required to have 100% of our teachers in every classroom have a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. This mandate is hard to maintain, since we cannot pay them the salary of a public school teacher.

We help our teachers obtain a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and then they leave upon completing their degree. We know quality teachers with Early Childhood degrees are important to a quality program, but without funding, we cannot pay our teachers a competitive wage.

We have been NAEYC accredited since 1985. Staff and parents have worked very hard and are proud of this accomplishment. TCCC has an outstanding reputation in our community and

never needs to advertise. We have at least 25 families on our waiting list and children on our list for the school year 2017. I urge you to maintain your role in the budget process to keep control over the line items to ensure transparency and accountability, so that our children and families are not hurt.

In summary, State Funded Child Development Centers provide a core service to working families in Connecticut and without these programs families would be hard pressed to find affordable, quality child care.

Here is a statement from one of our parents. "My daughter started at TCCC at age 3 ½. The teachers inspired my child to learn. She was ready for Kindergarten and has excelled ever since. I can tell you the staff and Director Ms. Mary C are the best group of instructors I have ever met. I recommend TCCC to everyone I meet that need a daycare/preschool. My daughter will be 13 in a month, and in the 7th grade she's on the honor roll every marking period. Since she started school she's been above grade level and I have TCCC to thank for that. Thank you to all the staff at TCCC for being the best in what you all do." I urge you to help the future children and families have a quality Early Childhood experience so they too can be ready for their future.

Thank you for your consideration of my remarks.

Mary Cecchinato

Executive Director

Torrington Child Care Center Inc. 338 Kennedy Drive Torrington, CT 06790

860-482-2621