

Testimony on HB 5044

Office of Early Childhood Budget

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

My name is Susan Corrice and I am the Financial Director of Riverfront Children's Center, Inc. in Groton, CT. We have a combination of funding sources, including private funders, School Readiness, Care-4-Kids, and Child Day Care. I wanted to remark about the Governor's Budget first, because I feel that moving toward a system of block-funding agencies and allowing commissioners to cut where they see fit is very risky in terms of the safety net of programs we provide. One seemingly small change in funding could cause a very drastic impact on individuals, programs, regions or the state as a whole. I think that having these decisions made discretionary to the Office of Early Childhood could have a very unintended negative impact upon our businesses as we try to roll out high quality early education to the children of this state. What is funded could become a function solely of what the Commissioner personally values or thinks works, rather than what works on the ground in a delicate interplay of resources so that children and families succeed. It is hard to see this delicate interconnectedness of programs from the top looking down.

In terms of the state budget, it is time that we put our money where our mouth is when it comes to educating young children. We know that if we don't fund programs and teacher salaries better, and we keep cutting them, that children's lives will be negatively impacted and we will have to live with the ramifications of that lack-luster effort for the next 50-60 years. If the children of this state are our future, then it is unconscionable for cuts of any kind to be made to the Care-4-Kids program, early childhood education and child day care grant, WIC, Head Start, etc. There is no two-ways about it. You either cut other things that are not as impactful to children's success and development so that we reap the long-term rewards of that fore-thinking of full funding, or you cut them and say they do not matter.

I urge you to look more closely at the damage that this could do to children and families in this Early Childhood System, and make them the priorities in your funding decisions. I have heard Commissioner Jones-Taylor say on many occasions that in all decisions that we make we must keep the children and what they need as the driving force for what we do. I am asking you to do that. Please protect and fund early childhood education in all its forms (Child Day Care, School Readiness, Care-4-Kids, Family Resource Centers, Head Start/Early Head Start, and the like). If children really matter then that is what needs to be done in this State.

Sincerely,

Susan Corrice

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