My name is Carol Annette and I am currently employed by Gateway Community College as the facilitator of the grant from the OEC for the South Central Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP). As such, I am opposed to the $4 million in direct cuts to the Office of Early Childhood and to the approach that the Governor has proposed to provide the money as a block grant to the Agency.

In January, agencies which received the AFP grant were notified that the money allocated for the AFP would become part of the contract that the OEC is developing with CT United Way to implement the quality initiatives of the department. Additionally at that time, we were told that the amount the OEC wanted CT United Way to allocate to the AFP would be $25,000 less per region. This amount was before the Governor proposed his cuts and so it could eventually be even larger. These projected cuts will not keep the AFP whole and will not allow any agency to keep an employee as a full time AFP facilitator.

The AFP has been and continues to be an important support to programs that are working to elevate their levels of quality in order to become NAEYC accredited programs. NAEYC Accreditation is mandated for state-funded programs.

The South Central Accreditation Facilitation Project serves the New Haven Community and the South Central Region (DSS). Gateway Community College has held this grant since 1998 with 153 total participants. The impact of this project on the community is apparent by a review of the data which 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 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. This invaluable collaboration has resulted in:

- Extension of training and support efforts to respond to the needs of the Early Childhood Community.
- Full integration of the Facilitator as a member of the ECE Program and the Social Science Department.
- Scaffolding by the AFP Project when our Early Learning Center and the Early Childhood Education Program were seeking NAEYC Accreditation and Associate Degree Accreditation; it has enabled us to serve as a model to other centers and academic programs.
- The number of quality placements increased for student teachers who must meet their course requirements in NAEYC accredited centers.
- The offering of credit courses on site for those centers seeking accreditation in addition to offering training and support.

As you can see by the above stated level of collaboration, the AFP provides ongoing support to community programs and to the teaching staff within those programs. The students of the college become the implementers of quality experiences for children in the centers.
I urge you to consider this as you design a budget for our state and provide enough funds to keep the CT AFP a vital, functioning part of an overall state plan for our youngest children.

Thank you,

Carol Annette

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