



Testimony on HB 5044
AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO THE BUDGET
Appropriations Committee February 19, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance a statewide membership organization committed to ensuring that all children in Connecticut are healthy, safe and ready for lifelong success.

I am here tonight to testify in support of the proposed budget for the Commission on Children. The Commission with its small staff leverages substantial philanthropic support and plays a unique role in policy development here in Connecticut. By convening experts, holding informational forums and networking with national organizations, the Commission on Children has brought innovative ideas to Connecticut. Three of which I would like highlight.

Parent Leadership - The Commission on Children created the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI). It is an intensive 20 week parent leadership development program. I had the privilege of hosting a PLTI class in New Britain when I was the director of the early childhood collaborative there. Our graduates went on to be leaders a number of community efforts. As a result of the experiences they had in PLTI they had the confidence and background knowledge effectively bring the parent voice to which ever table they were at. PLTI is now being replicated around the country.

The **Reading Pilot** – Growing out of frustration within the Black and Puerto Rican caucus at the state’s lack of progress in improving reading instruction for poor children, the Commission brought together experts, designed a program, pieced together public and private dollars to launch an effort that has improved reading scores in the pilot communities by 35%.

Two Generation Programs – The Commission worked with national experts and helped to make Connecticut a leader in the national effort break the cycle of poverty with two generation strategies that prepare parents for productive employment and their children for school success. With the funding for the two generation pilot program that you approved in the last budget Connecticut is now the first state working to put a two generation policy into action.

The Commission on Children plays a unique roll in Connecticut. It provides the General Assembly with expertise and forward thinking on issues that impact Connecticut’s children and families. On behalf of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance I urge you to support the proposed budget for the Commission on Children.