

February 23, 2016

**Bill 5306 An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood**

Representative Fleischman, Senator Slossberg and members of the Committee,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Danbury School Readiness Council. We request you reject the language change in bill 5306, related to the regional accreditation projects (AFP) in Section 6 (see below):

Sec. 6. Section 17b-749e of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2016):

The Office of Early Childhood shall, [establish and fund five regional accreditation projects, within available appropriations. The office shall select qualified applicants for each region through a request for proposal process. The office shall give priority to child day care facilities where at least twenty per cent of the children live with families earning less than seventy-five per cent of the state median income level] within available appropriations, support programs providing child care services to achieve accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The office shall set priorities for receipt of support under this section.

With state budget cuts and the need for more regionalization of programs and services, it seems counterproductive to take away a regional based program that is not only highly regarded in the state, but nationally as well. CT has been looked at as a model of service delivery in accreditation support. Our AFP staff have presented at national NAEYC conferences. CT's model is considered one of the best because of the regionalization, the local contacts, and the local training. The AFP experts are housed in four Regional Service Centers (RESCS) and one community college. There is no guarantee that these experts in the field, that the state has invested funds in training and sending to national conferences, will be transferred to the new contractor. This is a waste of taxpayers' dollars in a very tight economic time.

The Accreditation Facilitator Project (AFP) has been in existence since 1998 and works. The AFP helps support programs go through the NAEYC accreditation process, an accreditation that is mandated for all State funded early care and education programs. The AFP offers free support services on site for programs, as well as localized workshops which pertain to the NAEYC accreditation process. The AFP not only provides support in achieving accreditation, but also in improving program quality. Connecticut ranks 3rd in the nation for the number of NAEYC accredited programs, and this can be directly related to the support for programs through the AFP. The loss of these supports for Early childhood Education programs will be detrimental to them maintaining NAEYC, and costly, since they will have to hire outside contractors to provide the onsite supports and workshops.

The issue of transferring the contract to United Way, without an RFP, or public hearing, is unfair to legislators, and taxpayers in the state who should have a voice in how our dollars are being spent.

On behalf of the Danbury area early childhood programs, I respectfully ask you to reject the language that destroys a highly regarded, quality, regional approach system of support for our Early Childhood providers across the state.

Eileen Costello

Danbury School Readiness Coordinator

4 Mountainview Terrace

Danbury CT 06810

203-791-1904

