

Testimony Regarding HB5306
AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Eileen Vazquez
Hartford Association of the Education of Young Children
General Board Member
February 24, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

I am testifying today on my own behalf as a member of the Hartford Association for the Education of Young Children, a local affiliate of CAEYC, the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children, Connecticut's early childhood professional association.

For the last seven years I have dedicated my time to educating young children. This year I decided to join HAEYC voluntarily to collaborate with other professionals in delivering various professional development opportunities to teachers in the local Hartford area. My own center for which I work for, Trinity College Community Child Center, located right in the heart of the city of Hartford on Trinity College's campus has often times collaborated and received services from AFP and the Office of Early Childhood. We recently received our reaccreditation from NAEYC, the National Association of the Education of Young Children and we were very grateful to have AFP as a support system throughout the accreditation process. Not only has AFP assisted in the accreditation process but it has also provided teachers such as myself professional development opportunities of the highest quality.

The recent decision by the Office of Early Childhood to pull all AFP and professional development contracts in CT from agencies such as CAEYC, Gateway Community College, CREC, Education Connection, LEARN and Eastconn agencies with proven track records of success and place those funds with a new single vendor has had dramatic negative effects on programs across the state. Jobs have been lost and services will be interrupted for programs and providers.

Language changes in HB5306, dramatically changes the way services will be implemented for one of the most successful quality improvement programs in this state, the Accreditation Facilitation Program I am concerned with what will happen to programs like the one where I work for as well as all the wonderful Hartford area programs that I collaborate with on a regular basis if AFP funding is changed and their services are pulled from existing contractors. The AFP funding is currently scheduled to be pulled from existing contractors with a proven track record and placed with a new vendor. Currently directed by Deb Flis of the Office of Early Childhood, this program has helped hundreds of both public and private child care centers such as my own reach NAEYC accreditation, the highest indicator of quality for early childhood programs. Connecticut currently has 447 NAEYC accredited programs ranking 3rd in the country and 1st per capita; a proven track record of success of the current AFP programs. This proposal eliminates the legislative mandates for a regional delivery model of the AFP, eliminates the RFP application process and eliminates the priority into AFP for programs serving low income families. That means in addition to AFP being managed by a brand new vendor, without the expertise of Deb Flis as the Director of the project,

this bill would eliminate any legislative mandate to how AFP should be operated. Without the help of AFP, Connecticut's early childhood initiative will suffer. Why are we starting over when AFP has had so many successes since the project's launch in 1991. Let's build on the success of the existing model and strive to serve more programs, especially those who serve low income families such as my own at Trinity.

I respectfully request that you keep the existing language in Section 6. Section 17b-749e of the general statute regarding the structure of the Accreditation Facilitation Project going forward.