

Education Committee

Public Hearing, March 14, 2018

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Mary Cecchinato and I am the Executive Director of the Torrington Child Care Center and Co- Chair of the State Child Development Centers Director's Forum. The State Child Development Centers, established by the Legislature in 1970, serve over 4000 children birth to school age of low and moderate income working families. We are grateful for the long term commitment of the Legislature to quality early care and education. I am submitting testimony on two important early childhood bills.

HB 5449 "An Act Concerning the Alignment and Merging of Early Care and Education Program Funding Streams, eligibility, Rates and Policies." I applaud the Office of Early Childhood for including infants and toddlers in their mission and establishing a priority for infants and toddlers in Care4Kids funding. The Office held regional meetings in the fall and the lack of funding for infant and toddlers was an identified by parents and providers as a top priority. This bill would help address this critical need.

Overall, I support the legislation but want to ensure that the proposed 2% funding for OEC operations from program funding streams should not take money away from direct services. In addition, we support giving OEC the authority to set rates to address the low compensation for teachers and would again ask for assurances that the reimbursement rates for slots be increased from current levels and not decreased. Currently the legislature sets the reimbursement rates and not he Office.

HB 5450 "An Act Concerning the Staff Qualifications Requirement for Early Childhood Education. "The bill would eliminate the Bachelor Degree requirement for early childhood teachers in publically funded programs. I applaud Representative Sanchez for raising the issue of early childhood teacher requirements. The bill recognizes that it will be difficult for programs to meet the current 2018 deadline for 50% of teachers to have an Associates and 50% have a BA; and the 2020 deadline of all teachers having a BA degree by 2020. Passage of this bill is very important to the Torrington Child Care Center because we may not meet the July 2018 deadline. Last week one of my BA teachers gave her notice and I do not know whether I will be able to find another teacher with a BA to take her place. It took almost a year to find the one who is leaving for the public school. The resumes that are coming in do not look promising. My other teacher should have her Associates by June but anything can happen. As many people know there is not an easy way to obtain your BA in the Northwest corner of our state without a long commute. Please help us to continue offering quality care to the children and families we serve by passing HB 5450.

In addition, proposed Senate bill 183, section 6, "An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education" eliminates the pre-K to third grade certification and substitutes a pre-K to 6<sup>th</sup> grade certification. If this change passes, institutions of higher education will have no incentive to offer degrees in early childhood and the current credentials required will be impossible to obtain. With so many conflicting interests, I would like to recommend that the committee set up a work group including OEC, SDE and Higher Education to review credentials for early childhood teachers. In the interim, move the date for 50-50 Associate/BA degrees out to 2019. Early Childhood Teachers have fought hard over the years to gain stature and professionalism. We are hopeful that the Study Group will come up with a reasonable solution to the credential issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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