State Interagency Coordinating Council

H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAL ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFORE.

Appropriations Committee Hearing

March 6, 2019

To: Chairwomen Osten and Walker, Ranking Members Formica and Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit informational testimony on H.B. 7148 and discuss funding in Governor Ned Lamont’s proposed budget. As the General Chair and the Fiscal Co-Chairs of the State Interagency Coordinating Council, we wish to thank you on behalf of the entire ICC, for all of your efforts to support a quality program for the children and families in the Birth to Three Program. The fact that the budget successfully delineates a 1.75% increase for the Birth to Three Program at a time when fiscal austerity is a necessary assumption in the state budget, is greatly appreciated by all who constitute the Birth to Three network in CT.

We want to share information about some fiscal issues that stand out as fiscal challenges for the Birth To Three system during this biennial budget:

- The Birth and Hard of Hearing Programs have continually been operating at a deficit. The low incidence, high travel costs and recent changes in the reimbursement system has made it very difficult to continue to provide quality intervention services. One program has already limited their catchment area to the towns around Hartford. Families of child who are deaf or hearing impaired may not have equal access to quality services in a timely manner. The changes in the reimbursement system to B23 providers has resulted in significant fiscal challenges for most programs but has greatly impacted this specialty area.
- The increasing numbers of eligible children will make it very difficult to manage a balanced budget even with the 1.75% increase.
- There are families of eligible children in Connecticut that cannot afford the family participation fee and therefore can not receive early intervention services. Currently, families pay a fee if they are not on Medicaid or their income is 45,000 or greater (sliding fee scale). We are concerned that some families of children in Birth To Three are unable to afford this fee. Despite working hard. The United Way 2018 ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY reported that the Household Survival Budget for a family of four in Connecticut is 77,832. This is a significant discrepancy and our fear is we are losing these children. They are not receiving the vital services they need during b23 to prepare them for preschool. (change in Parent Fee would cost ~$148K)

These challenges do exist. However, we want to thank you for your continued support of the Birth to Three program

Cindy Jackson, Chair ICC Myra Watnick, Fiscal Co-Chair Elaine Balsley, Fiscal Co-Chair