March 5, 2019

TO: Education Committee of Connecticut General Assembly

Re: HB-7250 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPROVEMENT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLAY - Written testimony in support

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity for me to offer my written testimony in support of HB-7250 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPROVEMENT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLAY.

As an early childhood professional who works daily with children from infancy through kindergarten, I have been saddened by the decrease in unstructured play time I have seen within our early childhood system, especially grades kindergarten through grade 5 in our public schools.

It is my opinion that school districts typically allow for only the current mandate of 20 minutes per day, sometimes begrudgingly, when research clearly points to the benefits of unstructured play on the whole child. School districts report seeing increased issues with social and emotional development, then structure programs to address this (which take instructional time to implement.) I believe simply allowing children more opportunity to interact with one another in a developmentally appropriate playful manner will curb some of these issues.

When approached about increasing the time allowed for recess or unstructured play, educators ask "What will give?" or "Where will we fit it in?" They claim without a longer school day, instructional time and academics will suffer. I would counter that providing more recess or unstructured play time for children will inherently offset the loss of instructional time. In other words, it is my belief that offering even ten more minutes a day of play or recess, while reducing instructional time by five minutes for English Language Arts and five minutes for Math will not have an adverse effect on the academic outcomes of our children. I would also argue that extending this bill to cover grades six, seven and eight will also be beneficial. Older children need this time, too.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you.

Sincerely,

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