



Ned Lamont
Governor
Susan Bysiewicz
Lt. Governor

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Beth Bye
Commissioner

**Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood
Before the Committee on Committees of Public Health and Children
S.B. 2 – An Act Expanding Preschool and Mental and Behavioral Services for Children
February 25, 2022**

Good morning, Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Hwang, Representative Somers, Senator Anwar, Representative Linehan, Senator Kelly, Representative Dauphinais and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee and Committee on Children. My name is Beth Bye. I am Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify concerning **S.B. 2 – An Act Expanding Preschool and Mental and Behavioral Services for Children.**

We understand that the intent of this bill is to expand early childhood education opportunities for all. That is a goal that Governor Lamont and the OEC share. We know that the current child care and preschool system leave many families and young children without the high-quality early childhood services they need. And we know that early childhood programs are struggling survive post COVID, and that they have been challenged even before COVID to offer high-quality early childhood programming at a price that families can afford.

High-quality early childhood opportunities help to build young brains and provide critical learning tools for later education and life. Child care is a critical part of the workforce and economic development infrastructure. Families rely on child care to work so they can provide sufficient income to support their household.

OEC has been working closely with other states, think tanks, early childhood organizations, and the White House to stay tuned into federal legislation. The current draft of this federal bill is designed to build a state and federal policy that makes child care cost no more than 7% of family income. It would provide universal preschool to communities as well, using the existing infrastructure and expansion, as needed. Governor Lamont has urged President Biden to prioritize child care as they look to pass pieces of Build Back Better, as recently as last month.

OEC is working on several fronts, based on that federal bill, to plan for a more universal approach to early care and early education. We have been working to better understand the fiscal implications of a more universal approach to high quality care. Also, we have been looking at the

structures of early care and education programs that work in Connecticut, and in other states. We know there is much to learn from other efforts in this area.

While we support this focus from the Senate in Senate Bill 2, we continue to believe that federal legislation and funding is imminent and want to be sure that any steps Connecticut takes align with these federal funds and accompanying rules.

Thank you for giving me the time to testify. We are happy to answer any questions and to meet with you to further discuss in efforts to pass the best bill possible.

About the OEC

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) advances a two-generation family-centered approach in our pursuit of optimal health, safety and learning outcomes for young children. Through our core programs, we support infant and toddler care, preschool, after-school care, child care and youth camp licensing, home visiting, and early intervention to address developmental delays. The OEC is working toward better coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut's youngest children and families.