

Testimony regarding HB 5005, "An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021

Submitted By:

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Senator Osten, Representative Walker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mary Cecchinato and I am the Executive Director of the Torrington Child Care Center, Inc. and co-chair of the State Funded Child Care Center Director's Forum representing 102 early care and education child care centers in CT. Child Development Centers (CDC's) have provided quality, affordable early care and education to over 4,300 children in 53 municipalities in CT since 1968. We appreciate the sustained investment the Governor and Legislature has made in helping working families have access to safe, enriching childcare programs. (CT Statute 8-210b)

The Centers form an integral component of the early care and education system. We believe wholeheartedly in high standards for staff and programs and are currently mandated to acquire NAEYC accreditation and our staff must meet standards set by the School Readiness Law.

Oppose Cut to CDC and SR proposed reimbursement rate by 2.7 million

The proposed revised budget delays an increase of \$100/per slot to CDC's and School Readiness Program to 2022, this delay is counter intuitive to the recently passed minimum wage bill directed at raising salaries for many low wage jobs. Early Care and Education teachers deserve a raise and to cut the projected increase will make it very difficult for programs to raise salaries. Early Care and Education teachers are an important workforce, critical to Connecticut's economy. Maintaining this small raise in reimbursement rates for early care and education teachers will continue the commitment to high quality programs that children.

Support Parity in Reimbursement Rates for School Readiness Programs and Child Development Centers (CDC's)

School Readiness programs and CDC's are both included in the Office of Early Childhood's early care and education umbrella. By law, both have to be NAEYC accredited and teachers have to have an Associates Degree or BA in Early Childhood. To better align the programs, as envisioned by the creation of the Office of Early Childhood, CDC's request parity with the SR reimbursement rates. I presently have both CDC and School Readiness slots and do not understand why there is a difference in the reimbursement. (current reimbursement rates: SR \$8924.04; \$8596.64, full year, full day) CDC's have the same requirements as school readiness and we continue year after year receiving less funds. We presently receive 327.40 per child per slot less for our CDC slots. We currently are funded for 30 CDC slots which is more than double our School Readiness slots which provide a higher reimbursement. Having parity will help us pay our staff more which

will help in retaining qualified teachers at our centers. This will also help with the increase centers are facing with the new minimum wage increases.

Oppose Cut to After School Programs in the SDE Budget

Towns and Cities throughout Connecticut provide families with affordable after school programs. Working families depend on these programs to ensure a safe, enriching environment for children while they are working. Investment in after school programs needs to be viewed as an investment in the economy! Support for childcare, and after school programs must be viewed through the lens of the economy and as necessary as investments in transportation and workforce development. Please restore the \$ 530,000 in cuts to these essential programs so that our families can continue to have affordable before and after school care. This is a 9% cut that would eliminate services for more than five hundred children.

In summary, please support full funding and parity between Child Development Centers and School Readiness programs in this budget. I appreciate your review of this issue and thank you for the opportunity to submit testify today.

Sincerely,

Mary Cecchinato