



February 13, 2020

Testimony regarding: H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021

Submitted By:
Mary Emerling, RN, Middletown School Health Supervisor

Good afternoon Sen. Osten, Representative Walker, Sen. Lesser, Sen. Abrams and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mary Emerling, RN, MPA and I am the School Health Supervisor for Middletown Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Governor's proposed budget for the Office of Early Childhood. The School Readiness Council and Middletown providers are concerned about all of the areas listed below for our children and families but specifically would like to address bullet number 2.

1. Funding for the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership
2. The \$2.7 million cut to the early care and education line item
3. The continued lack of parity in funding for the Child Development Centers, and
4. The \$530,000 cut to After School programs in the Education Department Budget

We urge restoration of the proposed \$2.7 million cut to the Early Care and Education line item.

These funds represent a very small increase to School Readiness Providers and Child Development Centers. School Readiness providers have gone years without an increase since 2015. Our centers provide high quality child care to families on a sliding fee scale, opening access to quality preschool for families regardless of income. They make up a large segment of the preschool opportunities for children in our State. When we continue to under-fund their work, we are undermining the system that so many families rely on. Research shows that high quality early experiences for children prevent the need for high cost, intensive services later when they enter the public schools. Therefore, the state and cities have a much greater return on investment when they invest early in the needs of our children and families.

Many centers in Middletown and across Connecticut who participate in School Readiness are already at a financial loss when compared to the cost of providing care in centers who enroll only private paying families. Teacher pay is often an area where centers cut their own budgets to make ends meet since they are not able to raise tuition under the School Readiness guidelines. This further devalues the critical role Early Care and Education teachers play in providing the kinds of quality experiences that prepare children for Kindergarten and prevent the need for intensive services later on. In addition, as the minimum wage increases, programs will further struggle with the financial stressors they face and may even be forced to close some doors. Thank you for your time and dedication to this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mary Emerling', is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Mary Emerling, RN, MPS
Middletown School Health Supervisor