

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

Submitted By:

David Kulick, Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children (CTAEYC)

Good afternoon Sen. Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is David Kulick, and I am the Co-President of CTAEYC, and I live in Mystic, CT.

On behalf of our nearly 1100 early childhood education and care professionals across the state that make up our membership, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's proposed budget for the Office of Early Childhood. CTAEYC opposes the proposed cuts to child care funding in the Governor's budget and specifically would like to address:

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

CTAEYC is very pleased to see the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership funded in the governor's budget. As you may remember, this was taken out of the budget last year based on the assumption that the Federal funds were going away. In fact Connecticut won a very competitive federal grant to provide the Head Start wrap around services to infant toddler care in both family child care and center-based care. As such, the state funds are needed to support the child care part of the equation.

CTAEYC is extremely concerned about the proposed cut of \$2.7 million from the Early Care and Education line. This represents the \$100 increase per full day full year child care slot that was put into the 2nd year of the budget. As minimum wage increases again next September, so will the costs for early childhood education and care staff. Unlike other businesses, early childhood education and care settings cannot reduce staffing to offset these increased costs as that would put staff ratios out of set regulation, thereby compromising the quality of care for children across the state. Additionally, many child care programs, such as School Readiness programs, can't generate more revenue through higher tuition because under the School Readiness program parents pay on a sliding scale based on their income. School Readiness providers have gone years without an increase which is hard enough with insurance costs going up every year, but minimum wage is really going to have a significant impact. This cut would put an already fragile system in further jeopardy. As such, we urge you to find the money to restore this cut.

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All of the challenges that we've highlighted are even worse for the state funded Child Development Centers because they are trying to provide the same NAEYC accredited care with \$357 less per child per year. That's not equitable, and it's one of the reasons why several years ago you combined the CDC and School Readiness line items into one Early Care and Education line item. These two programs, that are providing identical care, should be paid at the same rate.

Finally, many of our children have older siblings that rely on after school programs until their parents get home from work. We strongly urge you to find funds to restore this cut so that all the kids being served now will still have after school programs next year.

Connecticut School Readiness programs and other early childhood education and care systems need to be strengthened, not restricted of resources from lack of funds. As one of our members shared, her daughter had an emotional reaction to her environment which was treated medically for 18 months; she just turned 3, that's half her life. Her center did not have the proper educational training or resources available due to lack of funds for their teachers which adversely affected not just her daughter, but her whole family as well.

CTAEYC stands for quality for all child care programs. Any cuts to state funding for child care will decrease quality. These cuts will result in programs laying off experienced staff members, reducing the amount of activities for children and an overall reduction in the quality and availability of programs in Connecticut.

High-quality, affordable, and consistent early childhood education and care with compensated teachers is important for Connecticut's short and long-term economy because it helps parents maintain employment and supports young children's cognitive and emotional development, thereby helping to build skills in tomorrow's workforce.

In closing, we implore you to restore this funding to help support child care and working parents across the state.