

Middlesex Coalition for Children

Testimony regarding: Governor's Proposed Budget

Submitted By: Izzi Greenberg, Executive Director, Middlesex Coalition for Children;
Co-Chair, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance; Member, Middletown School Readiness Council

Sen. Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Izzi Greenberg and I am the Director of the Middlesex Coalition for Children and I live in Middletown, where I am also a member of our town's School Readiness Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's proposed budget for the Office of Early Childhood. Specifically, I want to address:

1. The positive inclusion of Funding for the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership
2. The impossibly bad \$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 negative \$530,000 cut to After School programs in the Education Department Budget

First, on the positive side, I am very happy 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 daycare and centers. The state funds are needed to support the child care part of the equation.

But, I am extremely concerned about the 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. Minimum wage will increase again next September so our costs for staff will go up. School Readiness providers have gone years without an increase. That was hard enough with insurance costs going up every year, but minimum wage is really going to have an impact. **I urge you to find the money to restore this cut.**

Unlike other businesses, childcare centers can't reduce staffing because they have staff ratios set in regulation. Unlike other child care programs 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. That puts them in a bind.

All of those problems that I just described 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 fair, and that'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. I 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.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Izzi Greenberg
Executive Director

Improving the lives of children in Middletown and Middlesex County.