

To: Sen. Osten, Representative Walker, Sen. Lesser, Sen. Abrams and members of the Appropriations Committee.

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

As the Chair of Middletown's School Readiness Council and the organizer of the Opportunity Knocks Collaborative, our Early Health and Learning initiative, I am writing today to urge you to **restore the 2.7 million dollars that the Governor cut from the Early Care and Education line**. These funds represent a very small increase to School Readiness Providers and Child Development Centers. These 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. We know, research shows, high quality early experiences for children prevent the need for high cost, intensive services later when they enter the public schools. We should invest more deeply, not less, to ensure all families have access to care that meets their needs and provides the enriching experience their children deserve.

I'm sure you are aware that many centers in Middletown and across Connecticut, participate in School Readiness at a financial loss when compared to the cost of providing care and what centers might charge if they were enrolling private pay 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.

As members of the Early Childhood Alliance we also support the three other budget issues that impact the early childhood system statewide:

1. Maintain Funding for the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership
2. Address parity in funding for the Child Development Centers, and
3. Restore the \$530,000 cut to After School programs in the Education Department Budget

Our community has pieced together a system that includes School Readiness where we are able to provide most of our community's children a quality preschool experience. Please help us maintain this system by restoring the \$2.7 million in the Early Care and Education line item.

Thank you for your support and leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



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