

Testimony regarding: Governor's Proposed Budget

Submitted by: Jennifer Pane, Regional YMCA of Western CT. 2/13/2020

Good Afternoon Sen. Osten , Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Jennifer Pane and I am the director of the YMCA Children's Center, serving the Greater Danbury area.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Governor's proposed budget for the Office of Early Childhood. Specifically, I want to address the \$2.7 million cut to the Early Care & Education line item which funds School Readiness.

I am extremely concerned about the cut of \$2.7 million, which represents the \$100. increase per full day school readiness slot that was put into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the budget. With the increases to minimum wage, it has become increasingly difficult to keep up with staffing costs and unlike other businesses we are unable to reduce staffing costs due to child:teacher ratios, additionally the sliding fee scale limits our ability to generate more revenue.

I have been in the Early Childhood field for over 35 years and the challenges we are currently facing to recruit and retain educators and meet the increasing needs of the children and families we serve, is at a crisis point. With mounting costs and having gone years without an increase to the School Readiness Full time slot rate, we urge you to restore the 2.7 million, our children, families and teachers are depending on it.

Respectfully,

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