



State of Connecticut

Office of Early Childhood



Office of Early Childhood
Testimony before the Education Committee
H.B. 5522 – An Act Concerning School Readiness Funding
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Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher, Representative Ackert, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in regard to H.B. 5522 – An Act Concerning School Readiness Funding.

HB 5522 would increase the School Readiness Priority School District rate for full-day programs from \$8,346 to \$9,000 per child. The Office of Early childhood appreciates the intent of this bill, which is to close the hourly rate gap between full-day programs and school-day and part-day programs. Efforts to close this gap have been made over the years: full-day rates increased from \$7,000 to \$7,500 per child in FY05; to \$7,750 in FY06; to \$8,025 in FY07; and to the current rate of \$8346 in FY08. Information regarding current School Readiness and Priority School District and Competitive School District rates is provided in an addendum to this testimony.

In this year's budget, the Governor proposes to increase payments for School Readiness, including Priority and Competitive School Districts, and Child Day Care Centers. The Governor's proposed center-based rate increase applies to full-day, school-day and part-day early childhood slots in efforts to address quality for all settings. While the Office of Early Childhood places priority on full-day programs, we also support parent choice for school or part day programs. This rate increase for these early care and education programs, all of which are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), is much needed and demonstrates the Governor's commitment to investing in quality programs for our young children. Increasing rates allows programs to pay their staff better salaries, helping to attract and retain high-quality providers.

The Governor's budget also proposes multi-year Care4Kids rate increases for licensed child care home providers and unlicensed family, friend and neighbor providers as part of a collective bargaining agreement between the Office of Early Childhood and CSEA/SEIU Local 2001. The Care4Kids cumulative 12 percent rate increase over a four-year period for licensed family child care home providers is also extended to any licensed centers that accept Care4Kids. Unlicensed family, friend and neighbor providers will receive a rate of one-third of the minimum wage by year four of the contract. Care4Kids rates have not changed since 2001, which not only places a financial burden on providers, but also affects quality. For years, little attention has been paid to

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family child care providers who care for a majority of our infants and toddlers, children who are in the earliest years of their lives and need a good start.

These rate increases mark a significant step in the right direction toward supporting quality in all types of early childhood settings. Long term, we need to ensure the full adequacy of rates for all settings. Given our budget constraints, Connecticut is taking a big step forward.

The Governor also calls for universal access to preschool for low-income children by 2019. More than 4,000 low-income children who live in our poorest communities have no access to pre-kindergarten. The Governor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2015 expands access to pre-kindergarten by providing \$11,511,904 in funding for early learning opportunities for an additional 1,020 low-income children. This expansion would be achieved by expanding the School Readiness program, which has the appropriate oversight as well as an existing eligibility guidelines and funding infrastructure.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony.

ADDENDUM

SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM TYPES AND RATES

PRIORITY SCHOOL READINESS DISTRICTS (choice of four program types)

Full-Day/Full Year-Program (referred to as Full-Day program) - Provides early care and education services for children 10 hours per day, five days per week, for 50 weeks per year. Reimbursed at \$8,346 per child.

School-Day/School-Year Program (referred to as a School-Day program) - Provides early care and education services for six hours per day, five days per week for a minimum of 180 days. School-Day programs operate within the public school calendar, typically September through June. Reimbursed at \$6,000 per child.

Part-Day/Part-Year Program (referred to as a Part-Day program) - Provides early care and education services for 2 ½ hours per day, five days a week for a minimum of 180 days per year. Part-Day programs generally operate within the public school calendar, typically September through June; however, Part-Day programs can operate for more than 2 ½ hours per day and more than 180 days per year. Reimbursed at \$4,500 per child.

Extended-Day Program (referred to as a Wrap-Around program) - Provides early care and education services that extend the hours, days and/or weeks of programming for children who are in an existing Part-Day/Part-Year or Part-Day/Full-Year program, not funded by the School Readiness grant, in order to provide the equivalent of Full-Day services for these children for 10 hours per day, five days per week for 50 weeks. Reimbursed at \$2,772 per child.

COMPETITIVE SCHOOL READINESS MUNICIPALITIES (choice of 3 program types) \

Full-Day/Full Year-Program (referred to as a Full-Day program) - Provides early care and education services for children 10 hours per day, 5 days per week, for 50 weeks per year.

School-Day/School-Year Program (referred to as a School-Day program) - Provides early care and education services for six hours per day, five days per week for a minimum of 180 days.

Part Day/Part-Year Program (referred to as a Part-Day program) - Provides early care and education services for 2½ hours per day, five days a week for a minimum of 180 days per year.

The base grant for Competitive School District is \$107,000 per year, plus any expansion funding. (Currently, only Competitive School Districts with two or more priority schools are eligible for expansion funds. SB 26 would allow for all CSDs to be eligible for expansion funds.)