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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

David Wilkinson
Commissioner

**Testimony of David Wilkinson, Commissioner
Office of Early Childhood
Before the Human Services Committee
Re: SB 437 – An Act Concerning a Two-Generational Initiative**

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Good morning Senator Moore, Senator Markley, Representative Abercrombie, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. I am David Wilkinson, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify in support, with minimal modification, of SB 437 – An Act Concerning a Two-Generational Initiative.

I want to thank the Committee for raising this bill, which calls for data sharing across state agencies to promote a two-generation approach to service delivery.

The legislature created this agency in law four years ago with a mandate to better serve children and families in Connecticut. You called on us to be a different kind of state agency. Bringing together early childhood programs spread across five different agencies, in our enabling statute you called upon us to turn a fragmented system into a streamlined, more efficient agency that works better for families. You asked that our efforts be evidence-based, recognizing the overwhelming evidence that smart investments in the early years of life present our best, most cost-effective, chance to disrupt the relentless cycle of poverty. Understanding that it is hard to get great results for young children without addressing the conditions and circumstances of parents and caregivers, you asked us to be family-centered and work across silos. You also called on us to be data-driven, using analytics to continually improve on our results with better, more effective approaches. Finally, you asked us to be accountable for outcomes for families, seeing that the old model of measuring success by numbers served is a low bar when it comes to serving families in need and making the best use of taxpayer dollars.

The legislation before you today can create the conditions that will enable OEC to better fulfill the mission you have laid out for us. More broadly, this legislation holds the opportunity to help government be more fact-based and more efficient. It will allow government to advance better, more effective services for families, thereby delivering greater value for every public dollar spent.

I am hopeful that the work product of this 2Gen legislation can help provide needed value to Connecticut. This challenging budgetary time provides reason and opportunity to accelerate the policies that achieve better outcomes for the public dollar; to do more of what works and less of what doesn't.

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We can make government smarter, more efficient and more responsive by using data to help us solve multiple challenges. Better integrating data across systems can help us to: generate policy lessons about the performance of public investments; streamline services and reduce redundancy; improve case management by making it less fragmented and giving service providers the information they need; improve reliability of program evaluation while reducing costs; and perform predictive analytics that can help efficiently target limited resources to where they have the greatest impact.

This bill begins a process of mutual education and examination that will result in actions to better coordinate efforts to move in the right direction and realize the opportunities of successful 2Gen policy and practice. From a 2Gen perspective, combining data enables us to more effectively address barriers an individual may face. For instance, an unemployed single mom may seek to improve her economic stability through workforce training. If the workforce trainer is unaware and unable to connect her with services to address other common barriers to success, such as unstable housing and/or unreliable child care, that mother is unlikely to succeed, even in the best training program. Linking data can help agencies and providers address these barriers through more coordinated support, increasing chances of success and reducing long-term costs.

The Office of the Attorney General is well positioned to help the state navigate the complexities in important privacy protection policies and other barriers. We would also respectfully request that the Office of Policy and Management have a consultative role in this bill given it already houses the Connecticut Open Data website. It should also be noted that there is an existing collaboration of agencies that share secure data to improve education for students of all ages in Connecticut. This P20 WIN collaboration could play an integral role in this initiative. Smart, secure use of data will better enable Connecticut to find what's working best, and make it work for more people. SB 437 holds promise to build a thoughtful, responsible legal infrastructure for data sharing, a critical first step that could make Connecticut a leading state in realizing the value of data to achieve better results for its citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 437. I am happy to discuss this further here, or at a later date, and to answer any questions from the Committee.