



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**



Connecticut Office of  
**Early Childhood**

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**Testimony of Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D., Commissioner**  
**Office of Early Childhood**  
**Before the Committee on Children**  
**S.B. 321 – An Act Concerning an Infant and Toddler Education and Development Program**  
**Tuesday, February 17, 2015**

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Good afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify on S.B. 321 – An Act Concerning an Infant and Toddler Education and Development Program. This bill would establish an infant and toddler education and development program for parents to reduce child mortality rates and increase learning of young children.

I would like to highlight several programs that work to reduce child mortality rates and increase learning of our infants and toddlers. Within the Office of Early Childhood, home visiting programs that provide support and information to parents include the state-funded Nurturing Families Network and the federal Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program. In addition, the Birth to Three program, within the Department of Developmental Services, provides in-home support for children age birth to three with developmental delays. The Department of Children and Families also funds Child First and other home visiting programs for at-risk families. The State Department of Education funds Family Resource Centers, which include a home visiting component in their program. And finally, federally funded Early Head Start includes a home visiting component, working with very low-income parents with infants and toddlers.

I would like to focus my testimony on home visiting programs generally in Connecticut. Home visiting programs are designed to promote child wellness and development, strengthen families, and prevent child neglect, maltreatment, and abuse. Professional home visitors build relationships with families to provide resources, treatment, screening, parenting information, and support during pregnancy and throughout the child's early years in places where the families are already caring for their children, most often the home. Programs build on family strengths and provide individual support focused on both the child and the caregivers.

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Connecticut home visiting programs are tailored for and provided to families who can most benefit from additional support while they are raising young children. Support is provided to the people in a child's life who play a critical role in their growth and development and who are responsible for creating a nurturing environment. Typically home visiting is offered to families in poverty or who face barriers to children's healthy growth and development.

Early childhood home visiting is an effective prevention strategy that improves outcomes for young children and parents. High quality, research-based home visiting programs have been shown to:

- improve healthy child development across all domains (language development, cognition, physical development, social and emotional development, etc.)
- prevent child injuries, child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment; and
- improve pregnancy birth outcomes and preconception, prenatal, and inter-conception care;
- reduce emergency department visits and hospitalization;
- improve school readiness and attendance and decrease the grade retention and achievement gap;
- reduce crime and domestic violence;
- improve maternal and child health including maternal depression;
- improve family economic self-sufficiency and life skills; and
- improve the coordination of and referrals to other community resources and supports.

The Office of Early Childhood released a report in December 2014, "Connecticut Home Visiting Plan for Families with Young Children," pursuant to P.A. 13-178. The report was developed in collaboration with a large number of stakeholders, both inside and outside state government. The purpose of the report was to build a framework to better coordinate and integrate home visiting programs in Connecticut. We believe this report is an important first step in building a home visiting system that produces better outcomes for our youngest children. The Executive Summary of the report is attached to this testimony.

The report recommendations reflect robust, cost-effective, and practical next steps. When implemented, they will achieve increased administrative efficiency, improved program quality, and improved experiences for the families and children seeking or receiving support. In the long term, they will increase transparency to the legislature, improve access to home visiting programs for families, and foster meaningful collaboration across home visiting programs. The Office of Early Childhood has committed to convening a Home Visiting Consortium work group to work on implementing this plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I would be happy to take any questions.