



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



Connecticut Office of  
Early Childhood

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Nancy Wyman  
*Lt. Governor*

Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D.  
*Commissioner*

**Testimony of Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D., Commissioner**  
**Office of Early Childhood**  
**Before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Re: Governor's FY 17 Budget Plan**  
**Tuesday, February 16, 2016**

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Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify before this committee concerning the Governor's FY 17 budget plan.

The Governor is faced with a daunting task of balancing a budget in extremely difficult state fiscal times. In his State of the State address before the General Assembly, the Governor stated that we are living in changing times and state government must change with it. We, along with many states, were fundamentally altered by the Great Recession and as a result revenues are not keeping up with spending. We cannot spend more dollars than we bring in to state government and the Governor's budget proposal reflects that economic reality.

The Governor has proposed consolidating agency line items that provide state agency commissioners flexibility and discretion in making funding decisions to ensure core services are maintained. We identify our core service as the following: protecting the health and safety of children; providing family support to vulnerable families; providing access to high-quality early care and education; providing support to children birth to age three with developmental delays, and building supports for our most at-risk families, specifically those experiencing homelessness.

As commissioner, I welcome this change in budgeting and am committed to making sound funding decisions that ensure dollars are wisely targeted to services that support our young children most in need. Funding decisions will be based on available data and program outcomes. I will ensure our decisions are transparent and readily shared with legislators, policy makers, providers and the general public. We will post on-line detailed timely information about how we are spending our dollars.

The Office of Early Childhood must reduce agency funding by approximately \$12.5 million in FY17. The budget proposal specifically eliminates the Even Start and Early Literacy programs for a total of \$502,954.

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The Governor's budget proposal identifies \$3,578,018 in additional reductions to the consolidated line item. However, the Office of Early Childhood must reduce funding by an additional \$7.2 million to ensure the Birth to Three program is fully funded. Birth to Three is an entitlement program and therefore all eligible children must be served. This current year, the Birth to Three program is running a \$6.2 million deficit due to increased caseload growth and we are forecasting an additional \$1 million in caseload growth in FY17. Birth to Three is level-funded in the Governor's FY17 budget plan and does not reflect the current \$6.2 million deficit and anticipated caseload growth. Therefore, reductions from other programs must be made to keep Birth to Three whole.

One other change in the Governor's budget is the transfer of the Healthy Start program from the Department of Social Services to the Office of Early Childhood. Since FY14, Healthy Start has been transferred to the Office of Early Childhood through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The Governor's proposal will eliminate the time-consuming process of processing an MOA.

These are not easy economic times. I will work with my management team to come up with a plan to protect core services to the extent possible. Reductions in program funding will be necessary and staffing may need to be reduced. The changing economic reality makes it necessary to change how we budget and limit our spending to top priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am here to listen to your thoughts and answer any questions.