



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 Education Committee
Re: H.B. 5557 – An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention
of Early Childhood Educators
Monday, March 7, 2016

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood.

I am testifying today concerning **H.B. 5557 – An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of Early Childhood Educators**. This bill requires the Office of Early Childhood to establish an early childhood educator compensation schedule for employees of early childhood education programs who must meet the staff qualifications requirement in section 10-16p of the general statutes. Under section 10-16p, 50% of teachers designated as “qualified staff members” must have a bachelor’s degree by 2017 and 100% must have a bachelor’s degree by 2020.

I thank the committee for raising this concept. This bill focuses on a major issue in the early childhood field: recruiting, retaining and compensating a high-quality workforce – an essential component of providing children and families with high-quality care to ensure our investment yields better outcomes. However, given the state budget circumstances, I do have serious concerns about the fiscal impact of this legislation. To ensure providers have the ability to pay these higher required wages, the OEC would have to raise the per-child rate to providers. With no additional new funds expected in this fiscal climate, the OEC would serve fewer children.

The OEC has taken steps to address recruitment, retention, and compensation of the early care and education workforce, three of which are outlined below.

- To better understand teacher compensation, the OEC is working with a national expert, Anne Mitchell, on a Cost of Quality Study. The study will collect information on the cost of operating a high-quality early care and education program, including teacher compensation.
- The Office of Early Childhood recently submitted a report to the General Assembly addressing recruitment, retention and compensation. A key recommendation is to use the results of the Cost of Quality Study to develop a standardized salary schedule and incentive package for early childhood teachers and administrators. The report’s recommendations will be implemented in a phased-in approach when Connecticut’s fiscal situation improves.

- To help teachers attain degrees, the Office of Early Childhood provides scholarship support through two main funding streams, one of which is solely dedicated to state-funded programs to support the degree attainment requirements. In Fiscal Year 15, a total of \$968,800 was expended on scholarships supporting about 250 individuals each year.

The OEC believes the best course of action is to review the results of the Cost of Quality Study before placing a new mandate on providers we cannot afford in this new economic reality. We will continue to develop strategies to ensure we have a robust pipeline of talent into the field and incentives to retain them.

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