



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

Cathy Hinsch, Office of Lt. Governor M. Jodi Rell—860-524-7384

Jill Skowronek, CT Voices for Children—203-498-4240

Tom Murphy, State Department of Education—860-713-6525

Lieutenant Governor Rell Pledges Support for Young Children

Keeping the state's young children at the top of her list of priorities, Lieutenant Governor M. Jodi Rell becomes the first public "Children's Champion" in Connecticut as part of a multi-year commitment for young children called "Ready, Set, Grow...CT Kids!" The Lieutenant Governor has pledged her leadership to raising public awareness about the importance of children's early years and encourages others, and especially the business community, to join her in this important work.

"We must ensure that all Connecticut schoolchildren enter kindergarten ready for school success," stated Lieutenant Governor Rell. "We cannot afford to let one child fall through the 'preparation gap' between those who have access to quality early learning experiences and those who have not. All children deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential and it is vital to our state's economic development that we commit ourselves to helping them."

According to a recent report by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Connecticut's employee pool is shrinking and its population is getting older. There is currently only one child for every three adults in the state, yet at least a third of our children are entering kindergarten ill prepared. Those who start behind and don't catch up face poor job and life prospects with bleak economic futures.

"Quality early learning experiences help level the playing field for all children and protects taxpayers' public school investment with savings that accrue from reduced spending on special education services, reduced welfare assistance, higher taxes paid for higher earnings, and, yes, reduced prison costs," stated Janice Gruendel, co-president of CT Voices for Children.

Connecticut has the resources and the know-how for getting children ready for school, with nationally recognized models like our School Readiness Program and HUSKY health care system. Today, the State Department of Education will unveil its plans for providing universal access to preschool, an important first step in improving the learning outcomes for all of our young children.

- More -

“There are now at least 15,000 young children in Connecticut who need access to quality early learning, and many other families who struggle to provide the best for their children,” explained Associate Commissioner George Coleman. “Universal preschool is a first step in meeting these needs for our state’s children and families and we believe it is an essential investment in our educational system and our state’s future.”

#