CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

33 Whitney Avenue
New Haven, CT 06510
Voice: 203-498-4240
Fax: 203-498-4242
www.ctkidslink.org

Testimony of Jamey Bell
before the Appropriations Committee

CONCERNING

BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

February 11, 2009

Thank you, Members of the Appropriations Committee, for this opportunity to provide testimony concerning proposed appropriations which affect the state's early care and education systems. I am the Executive Director of CT Voices for Children, whose mission is to promote the well-being of all of Connecticut's young people and their families by advocating for strategic public investments and wise public policies.

Connecticut Voices for Children strongly supports development of a uniform reporting form for all preschool and child care programs receiving state funding. As advocates for public investments that *make sense*, we particularly stress the need for this innovation as a crucial monitoring and oversight tool. Under the current reporting system it is impossible to calculate the number of children the state is serving through their early care programming as multiple funding streams are subsidizing the care of one child. For example, a three-year-old may receive a childcare subsidy via Care4Kids and simultaneously be awarded a preschool slot in a state-funded center or School Readiness program. Data collection between programs is not coordinated, so "double counting" results. While we can, and do, look at the number of children currently being served by individual state programs, and how that number has changed over time, our inability to estimate the total number of children served makes it difficult to offer an accurate assessment of Connecticut's progress in serving all children in need.

The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Work Group expressed in their recommendations to both the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council that in order for QRIS to be successfully implemented a structure needs to be created for early care and education. Uniform funding and reporting

requirements were specifically recommended as the linchpin of a new, successful organization structure. The keys to supporting and educating the greatest number of Connecticut's children in the highest quality settings are organization and standardization.

You will hear from the provider community—those who know this best-- that multiple reporting requirements are redundant, time consuming and inefficient. Streamlining and making uniform reporting requirements will allow programs to file necessary reports and information without duplication, thereby improving administrative function and increasing staff time available for children. This change will relieve the burden of many childcare center directors who spend hours every month reviewing numbers on attendance, services, and staff – many times for the same child who receives support from different programs. In a time of service cutbacks and reduced funding it is imperative that all effort should be used to make sure that dollars are being used directly to support children as opposed to being misspent on duplicative and uninformative administrative costs.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today.