



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Joseph W. Drexler, Esq.
Deputy Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

March 3, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. I am Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D., Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 25 An Act Establishing The Office Of Early Childhood.

DDS applauds the Governor's establishment of an Office of Early Childhood through Executive Order No. 35 to oversee a coordinated system of early childhood care, education and support and this bill further promotes this endeavor.

As a part of DDS, the Connecticut Birth to Three System has consistently maintained the highest professional standards and has been recognized by the federal government as a high performing early intervention program. The mission of Birth to Three is to strengthen the capacity of Connecticut's families to meet the developmental and health-related needs of infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities. This program ensures that all Connecticut families have equal access to a coordinated program of comprehensive early intervention services and supports that are family-centered, occur in natural settings, foster collaborative partnerships, and recognize current best practices in early intervention. During fiscal year 2013, 44 Birth to Three programs processed 8333 new referrals, completed 7780 evaluations and found 4860 children eligible. Over the course of the year, along with children who were already enrolled, more than 9300 children received services from Birth to Three with an average daily enrollment of 4420 children.

The Office of Policy and Management contracted with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to conduct a study regarding the feasibility of moving the Birth to Three Program to the Office of Early Childhood. The study was completed in December 2013 and was presented to the co-chairs of Appropriations in early January 2014. The study itself is posted on both the Office of Early Childhood and Birth to Three websites and the co-chairs received hard copies. The administration chose not to move the Birth to Three Program in the middle of biennium, and thus, did not include it in legislation this year. Birth to Three is currently working in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood to coordinate services. In the long-run, it makes sense for the Birth to Three Program to move into OEC, but at this juncture the current

Phone: 860 418-6000 ♦ TDD 860 418-6079 ♦ Fax: 860 418-6001
460 Capitol Avenue ♦ Hartford, Connecticut 06106
www.ct.gov/dds ♦ e-mail: ddsct.co@ct.gov
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arrangement is working well and provides more time to plan with the federal government for a transfer. Additional consideration must be given to planning how to structure the program move to preserve the almost \$17 million received through Medicaid, third party insurance and parent fees.

The Birth to Three System is already collaborating with the OEC. The Director of Birth to Three has been temporarily assigned to the OEC to assist the agency in its first year of operation. The Director serves as the OEC's point of contact in DDS and specifically assists or has assisted in 1) the pending transfer of the federally funded home visiting program from the Department of Public Health to the OEC in July, 2014, 2) the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application that was submitted, 3) the hiring and orientation of new staff, and 4) coordinating state hiring, purchasing and information technology issues. Additionally, 1) fifteen Birth to Three staff have coordinated with OEC staff on data, training and public awareness as well as attending culture building activities initiated by OEC, 2) the Assistant Director for the Birth to Three program participates in weekly OEC Leadership Team meetings and committee work with the current divisions of the OEC, and 3) DDS worked collaboratively with the OEC on the completion of the required study regarding the feasibility of moving the Birth to Three program from DDS to the OEC.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 25. Please contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative Affairs at 860 418-6066 if you have any questions for us regarding the Birth to Three Program and its role in early childhood.