

1. Name:

Chenae Russell

2. Email:

3. Town *

Hartford

4. I am a: *

Please select at most 2

☐ Parent

☐ Childcare Provider

☐ Early Childhood Educator

☐ Community Organization

☐ Employer

☐ Advocate

☒ CT State Agency Employee

5. Type or paste your Testimony here: *

Good evening, Tri-chairs of the Early Childhood Education Endowment: Senator Maher, Representative Farrar, and Interim Commissioner Trueworthy,

This testimony is submitted by the CT Office of Early Childhood Parent Cabinet Coordinator, Chene Russell on behalf of the CT Office of Early Childhood's Parent Cabinet, it's 15-member statutory advisory committee to OEC (P.A. 23-160, Sec. 40).

We, the members of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Parent Cabinet, proudly support the Early Childhood Education Endowment and the Advisory Board overseeing its implementation.

The Endowment is already making a difference. Families are starting to access more affordable, high-quality child care through Early Start CT. As the Endowment grows, it will continue to expand access and ease financial burdens, allowing parents to work, pursue education, and care for their children without making difficult sacrifices. It also helps families of children with special needs to access full day options for inclusive, supportive early learning environments. One parent cabinet member shares how "The Early Start CT program has been a tremendous help for my family. My daughter is in a full day program and it only costs \$136 a month for her to attend. Without the funding from Early Start CT, her program would be \$730 a month, which as a single mom of two, would be extremely hard to pull off in today's economy. I am very thankful to be on the Parent Cabinet team and get to contribute to discussions about what families are looking for and needing for their young kids in CT and getting to share feedback and concerns that my community members have and actually have us all feel heard."

Parent voices have been central to this process from the beginning. Our OEC Parent Cabinet has contributed feedback to the OEC in communication to families and more. We have a member serving on the Advisory Board to also help uplift parent voices and connect back to the larger parent cabinet and local parent leaders. We remain committed to ensuring that family experiences continue to shape the Endowment's rollout and long-term success.

We ask the advisory to continue to keep family voice at the center of the work as the people the systems impact the most. We also ask the advisory to consider the diverse voices of local families and community members, those with unique needs and shared challenges. It is the ongoing commitment of the Parent Cabinet to ensure that these perspectives are meaningfully included in implementation.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Connecticut's children and families.