

1. Name:

Laura Gunneson

2. Email:

3. Town *

Branford

4. I am a: *

Please select at most 2 options.

☐

Parent

☐

Childcare Provider

☒

Early Childhood Educator

☒

Community Organization

☐

Employer

☐

Advocate

☐

Other

5. Type or paste your Testimony here: *

ENDOWMENT ADVISORY BOARD TESTIMONY 12/10/25

Commissioner Trueworthy, Representative Farrar, Senator Maher, and esteemed members of the Endowment Advisory Board,

After graduating from UCONN in the early 1990's, I began my career in Early Childhood. Many issues were discussed in classes at the time that we are still dealing with today. Accessibility, affordability, and program quality for families as well as fair wages, employee benefits and increasing regulations for providers. Frustration with these issues has been growing for decades. This endowment has begun the work of resolving some of the most critical issues we have struggled against for my entire 30+ year career.

The relationship between those who represent the regulatory body and providers has been stressed by these issues. It will take time and consistency to build a new foundation between all those who represent the Early Childhood community. I believe we are already seeing positive change in this area.

My varied ECE background led me to the opportunity to serve on the Branford School Readiness Council and, in turn, become the Branford Local Governance Partner Liaison. It is truly an honor to be a part of building this new system for providers and families.

Working closely with State Representative Robin Comey of the 102nd district of Branford, along with town officials and the superintendent of schools, our goal is to build a strong, collaborative foundation for all childcare providers in Branford.

I am enjoying my new role as LGP liaison and have already seen some positive results through my relationship building. I have hired two Parent Ambassadors. We have four programs pursuing Accreditation, two with AQIS state funded support. A collaboration with Charter Oak State College was attended by 42 people from various programs in Branford. This has led to some staff members getting started with CDA and Associates Degree programs funded through the Office of Early Childhood scholarship program. We have built collaborative programs for families with the Blackstone Library and the Community Dining Room and I have been meeting with Branford's current Early Start Providers monthly for feedback and guidance.

I am looking forward to building our Community Table as well as a Parent Cabinet with representatives from every program in Branford regardless of funding source. We will be planning a mini-conference, a Week of the Young Child Event and a Day for Young Children summer event for families.

Though we have not yet seen an increase in available childcare spaces, several programs are applying for Early Start and Expansion Grants.

All this is possible through your continued funding and support of the Endowment. I thank you for this support and ask you to please consider expanding LGP funding so we can do more in our communities.

Sincerely,
Laura Gunneson
LGP Liaison, Branford