

1. Name:

Mary Peniston

2. Email:

3. Town *

CT ECFC covers statewide

4. I am a: *

Please select at most 2 options.

☐

Parent

☐

Childcare Provider

☐

Early Childhood Educator

☐

Community Organization

☐

Employer

☐

Advocate

☒

ED of CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative

5. Type or paste your Testimony here: *

Testimony from the CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative (CT ECFC) for the Public Hearing of the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Committee, Wednesday, December 10, 2025

(1) The bold vision that has been put forth - to provide all Connecticut families with access to affordable, high quality early care and education – can only be realized with significant annual investments to grow the endowment. Our state needs to make an ongoing commitment to significantly grow the endowment over the coming years; otherwise, our state will not be able to generate the necessary income to build and sustain a system that meets the needs of Connecticut's families and stabilizes the business model of ECE providers.

(2) We also encourage the Advisory Committee to thoughtfully consider the priorities of how endowment income is invested in the Early Start system so that Connecticut creates the equitable and mixed delivery system that has been promised. We recommend balancing the goal of expanding access with the imperative to raise Early Start rates, recognizing that creating new slots will only be sustainable if rates adequately support program quality and stability. Without funding that covers the true cost of care, Early Start providers are being forced to tap into Care 4 Kids in addition to Early Start funding. This is contributing to the high demand for Care 4 Kids which is currently maxed out and has a wait list of about eight months.

(3) Family Child Care (FCC) currently relies on Care 4 Kids as its primary source of public funding and those providers are often subsidizing low-income families out of their own pockets while families are on the waitlist. Family Child Care is an important part of the ECE system as it is the primary source of care during non-traditional hours and is well suited to serving culturally and linguistically diverse families. Early Start needs to be more accessible to FCCs. They need clear supports to be able to increase participation, and consideration should be given to how contracts are set up, possibly through an intermediary, to ensure accessibility.

(4) We also support advocates' position to ensure Early Start funding covers full day/full year rather than school day/school year. We should not depend on Care 4 Kids or families to have to pay the significant additional costs that would not be covered by a system that only subsidizes school day/school year.

(5) Finally, we want to highlight that child care businesses need information about Early Start changes in a timely manner. These businesses need to plan for changes in revenues and costs or other requirements that will have an operational impact.

About the CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative: Established in 2011, CT ECFC's mission is to bring the collective voice and resources of philanthropy to build and sustain a comprehensive and equitable early childhood system that works for all children, families, communities and the workforce in Connecticut. Our collaborative of 20 funders is honored to be part of the good work being done in our state that is building towards "a comprehensive and equitable early childhood system, that is effective, efficient, and high quality that leads to improved outcomes for all children, families, communities and the workforce in Connecticut."

Thank you for your time and consideration. We invite the Committee to reach out to CT ECFC as implementation plans continue to develop. We welcome continuing to share our perspective.

Contact: Mary Peniston, CT ECFC Executive Director, mpeniston@ctphilanthropy.org, December 8, 2025