



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BLDG.
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

October 12, 2011

The Honorable Arne Duncan
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Duncan and Secretary Sebelius,

The Connecticut General Assembly's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee strongly supports Connecticut's proposed Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) application. If funded, this application will improve the quality of early learning and development, better preparing Connecticut's children for lifelong academic and employment success.

Connecticut's RTT-ELC application accelerates momentum that has been building for several years towards the development of a coordinated, comprehensive system of care for Connecticut's young children. The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee has contributed to the foundation of early learning and development that RTT-ELC will enhance.

We are pleased that the RTT-ELC projects include strengthening the quality and coordination of the early care and education workforce as a central tenant of improving statewide early care systems. By increasing coordination and cooperation of higher education institutions through the RTT-ELC initiative, our early childhood workforce will be well equipped to successfully address the needs of Connecticut's children and their families. We are also pleased to see resources devoted to a comprehensive data protocol to monitor progress in achieving RTT-ELC's ambitious goals and inform policy development and program planning. Through these initiatives, high-need children will be better connected to necessary support services.

This Committee has contributed to creating the systems that will allow Connecticut's higher education institutions to enhance the quality and coordination of their early childhood curricula as proposed in the RTT-ELC application. Below are a few examples:

- Public Act 04-212, *An Act Concerning Workforce Development*, which the Committee approved in 2004, created Connecticut Charts-A-Course (CCAC), a statewide professional development, program improvement and registry system for early care educators in center-, group- and family-based settings. CCAC offers career counseling and training, advancement in career ladders to early care educators, and helps early care providers obtain accreditation for their programs. CCAC will play an integral role in advising RTT-ELC partners in the development of a comprehensive Workforce Knowledge and

Competency Framework, articulation agreements across 2- and 4-year colleges and universities, and increased implementation of the Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC) program.

- In addition and most recently, the Connecticut General Assembly enacted Public Act 11-181, *An Act Concerning Early Childhood Education and the Establishment of a Coordinated System of Early Care and Education and Child Development*. This Act sets the framework on which Connecticut's RTT-ELC Plan was established – so as to ensure many more children enter Kindergarten ready to succeed. The Act requires building a coordinated system that consolidates existing early childhood education and child care programs and services for children from birth to age eight into a coordinated system that strives to: reduce the academic achievement gap; increase participation in early childhood education programs; increase parent engagement, family literacy, and parenting skills; increase oral language development and social competence; and decrease special education placements.
- Also, the Connecticut General Assembly recently enacted Public Act 11-54, *An Act Concerning Requirements for Early Childhood Educators*, which makes several changes to strengthen the required qualifications for early childhood educators.

Through the highly collaborative planning process used to develop Connecticut's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) application, we are confident that RTT-ELC activities will improve the quality and coordination of early care learning and development at the state, regional and local levels. As a result, Connecticut's children will be better supported in their developmental needs in their critical early years, positioning them to attain academic success and gainful employment as adults.

We, the undersigned leaders of the Connecticut General Assembly's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, fully endorse Connecticut's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge application and look forward to supporting its successful implementation.



The Honorable Beth Bye (D)
Connecticut State Senate – 5th District
Co-Chair, Higher Education and Employment
Advancement Committee



The Honorable Roberta B. Willis (D)
Connecticut House of Representatives – 64th District
Co-Chair, Higher Education and Employment
Advancement Committee



The Honorable Antonietta Boucher (R)
Connecticut State Senate – 26th District
Ranking Member, Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee