



Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, Inc.

TESTIMONY REGARDING HB 6579: AN ACT CONCERNING DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING FOR CHILDREN

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Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee: I am Vice President for Health Initiatives at the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI). Our mission is to promote primary and preventive health and mental health care for all children in Connecticut, with a particular focus on the underserved. Our Board Members include key state leaders in health care and members of the academic, education and business community who are committed to improving developmental outcomes for children in Connecticut. In this testimony, I provide information from two recent CHDI initiatives in the hopes that we can inform your deliberations on HB 6579.

With support from the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, in October of 2013, CHDI prepared and released a report, *The Earlier The Better: Developmental Screening for Connecticut's Young Children*, which provided a comprehensive review of developmental screening in the state for children ages birth to five. Using a variety of data sources, we could pinpoint the number of screenings that were administered, but not the number of children screened or the percent of Connecticut's children receiving developmental screening through their pediatric health services, early care and education programs or home visiting services or the percent of Connecticut's young children who were screened for developmental delay. We could not say whether the same children received screening in several sites, or whether the number of screens reported represented unique children. Concerned that some children were screened multiple times, while others were not screened at all led us to recommend that a statewide data system be developed to include child-level data on screening, screening results and follow up services provided across pediatric primary care, home visiting, early care and education and other programs that screen young children. We also emphasized in our recommendations the importance of ensuring that children, for whom screening shows concerns, are connected to further evaluation and/or intervention services, preferably through Child Development Infoline at the United Way, Connecticut's single point of entry for developmental services for young children.

In 2013, CHDI, in collaboration with the Graustein Memorial Fund and Grossman Family Foundation, undertook a study of the connections between health and early care and education providers. We were interested in the extent to which the Early Childhood Health Assessment Records (or health forms, yellow forms) provided essential health information to early care sites to ensure health and safety of children in child care and provided data that could be used for community and state level early childhood health monitoring and planning. State licensing requires that all licensed child care centers and home day care sites have a health form, completed by the parent and health care provider, for each child enrolled in their program.

We analyzed data from almost 1,700 health forms from 23 child care sites. More than half of the forms (58%) had missing information on whether or not the child health provider had performed a developmental screen. This creates a need for the child care site to connect back to the pediatric health provider to determine whether or not the child was screened or to perform the screening, which may mean that the child is screened more than once. Recognizing the inefficiencies and possible lost opportunities to address developmental delays that result when health providers do not report screening to child care sites, we are working to create more awareness about the importance of the health forms as a communication mechanism between health and child care sites.

HB 6579 would promote improved reporting of developmental screening to child care sites, which can ensure that all young children are screened at least annually for developmental risk and delays, either by their medical provider or in their child care setting. HB 6579 can also lead to more opportunities for developmental promotion, both through connections made by Child Development Infoline as well as within child care.

I am pleased to provide you with additional details from CHDI's work.

Thank you.

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