



Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, Inc.

February 18, 2013

**TESTIMONY REGARDING GOVERNOR MALLOY'S PROPOSAL TO CONSOLIDATE FIVE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONS UNDER ONE COMMISSION ON CITIZEN ADVOCACY**

Submitted to: Appropriations Subcommittee on Legislative Affairs

By: Judith Meyers, Ph.D. – President and CEO, Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI) and the Children's Fund of Connecticut

Senator Bye, Representative Lesser, and other members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Legislative Affairs, I am writing this testimony as President of the Children's Fund of Connecticut and its subsidiary, 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. We have worked on policy and systems reform for children in our state for close to 14 years.

I am writing in response to Governor Malloy's budget proposal to consolidate five legislative commissions under one Commission on Citizen Advocacy, with a particular concern about the Commission on Children. We understand that the current fiscal crisis demands optimal efficiency in government and in no way do we underestimate the enormity of the challenge. That said, I believe that the range of issues covered by these five separate Commissions is so broad and disparate, that they will lose any effectiveness they have to fulfill their mandates.

The issues affecting children in our state persist and in difficult economic times these needs will be on the increase. Undoing what has been built may provide some short-term savings but they are minimal in light of the long-term consequences. The Commission on Children has a long history of exceptional work in planning, policy development, parent leadership, prevention, promoting school readiness, and most recently in providing needed support for children throughout the state in times of crisis – responding to disasters both manmade and natural. I do not think it is in the best interest of children in this state to lose this focus, as could so easily happen under one large umbrella agency.

Our organization has worked in close partnership with the Commission on Children on a range of issues. Their Director and staff have been instrumental in helping us translate the research and best practice information we produce into actionable policy and connect with legislators and state agencies to advance the reforms in children's service systems that have been based on our efforts. Connecticut has been seen as a leader on children's issues and the Commission on Children has been an important player in making that possible.

I recognize that each of these Commissions has a constituency that will speak to its preservation, but I sincerely hope that the Subcommittee will see its way to preserve the Commission on Children as an independent entity and find the small savings that would be realized by the consolidation in some other way that does not undermine over 25 years of exceptional work.

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