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Testimony in Support of HB 6711: An Act Concerning Communication Between Police and Child Day Care Centers

Good Afternoon Senator Larson, Representative Dargon and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee

My name is Elizabeth Fraser; I am a policy analyst at the Connecticut Association for Human Services. CAHS works to reduce poverty and promote economic success through both policy and program work. I am here today in support of HB 6711: An Act Concerning Communication between Police and Child Day Care Centers

Each day parents across Connecticut drop off their children at child care facilities with the expectation their children will be cared for, nurtured and kept safe. Providers are well aware of the great responsibility that comes with ensuring the safety and well- being of the children in their care and plan accordingly.

As part of licensing, the NAEYC accreditation process and best practice, early childhood centers are required to have emergency plans in place. Providers prepare for all contingencies; weather, natural disasters and unwanted intruders. In fact, many centers participated in the comprehensive trainings that have been provided through CT Charts- a -Course.

Unfortunately there is a disconnect. Providers are prepared for all contingencies however, when violence or an emergency situation is occurring in the nearby community, there is not a consistent way that providers are notified of the potential danger. Providers may be taking children for a group walk in the neighborhood, they may have children playing outside or it may be arrival or dismissal time. Without timely knowledge of a potential danger, children, staff and parents are vulnerable.

Planning needs to be two ways, childcare centers should have the required emergency plans in place and be responsible for informing their community public safety department of their location and the number of children they serve. The community public safety departments should know where childcare facilities are located and be prepared to inform staff of any localized activity that could endanger the well-being of our youngest children.

Public schools already have such a system in place and it may be the case that some communities are already taking these steps with the early care providers. However, there have been reported incidents from communities where this has not been the case. With available technology, such as text alerts and phone call alerts, and our 211 system, it seems as if there must be a cost effective and consistent way to relay such important information.

We should not wait for the unthinkable to happen before we address this public safety issue. Thank you for this opportunity.