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Testimony in Opposition to H.B. No. 6825 :AN ACT MAKING DEFICIENCY APPROPRIATIONS AND ADDRESSING THE DEFICIT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.

Good afternoon Senator Bye , Representative Walker and Members of the 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 on behalf of CAHS to speak in opposition to some of the rescissions that were made to the budget for the fiscal year ending in June, 2015. This is certainly a difficult situation. We know that this budget must be put in balance and the decisions that need to be made to solve this problem are difficult at best. There is really no good solution. However, we believe that choices that need to be made should not impact those programs that help our most vulnerable populations, this includes those that give children and families the support and resources needed to find success. In addition, programs that serve to support our workforce through education, training and childcare should be excluded from the rescission plans. Finally, our dedication to funding high quality early care and education should remain a priority.

Care for Kids

It is our understanding that the \$5.8 million cut to Care for Kids that is included in the Governor's most recent rescission package, is funding that has not been utilized. We are concerned that a plan was not in place to ensure this funding was spent in a timely fashion, that now it will not be available to families, and that the money will not be restored in the 2016 budget.

The dollars spent through this program help families to work, get ahead and contribute to the economy. This money should never have been left on the table. The \$5.8 million should be available to help working families. A very easy solution would be to eliminate the eligibility cliffs in the program by re- opening Priority Group 6. This action would allow families who are already receiving Care for Kids to continue to be eligible if their family income increases to over 50% and up to 75% of the State Median Income.

(Connecticut provides Care for Kids subsidies for those families earning under 50% of State Median Income or about \$51,586.00 for a family of four. This is far less than the amount of income needed for a "survival budget", let alone what is needed for actual family stability. Unfortunately, if a family receives even a small increase in income that puts them over 50% of the SMI, they immediately become ineligible for the Care for Kids subsidy. This has the unintended consequences of having the family turn down a small raise to have continued eligibility, lose eligibility and not be able to work at all or find cheaper and possibly less appropriate childcare. This contradicts the steps we need to take to help low income, working families rise into the middle class.)

Quality Enhancement Dollars

Childcare quality enhancement is not an extra; it is a necessary part of providing a highly trained early education workforce and programs of quality. In order to provide quality early experiences, maintain NAEYC accreditation as required and be up to date on best practice, program staff are in a continual cycle of training and development. As we are approaching an early care workforce crisis, the need to provide training and development is all the more important. All funding available for training and quality enhancement should stay intact to support the early care community.

Program Cuts

Even Start, Community Plans for Early Childhood and the Children's Trust Fund, are examples of programs that cannot afford to have cuts made this late in the year. For example, each individual Even Start program has a budget in place with fixed expenditures. To implement the requirements of the program the state funding requires a have a local match. Items such as rent, contracts with childcare providers and contracts with staff members cannot be re-negotiated. This rescission will leave the programs with their own budget shortfalls. Care should be taken to consider the ramifications of cuts to important and valuable programs.

Transform CCSU

The Governor's rescissions include a cut to Transform CCSU. CAHS is concerned that a portion of the funding that is used to support transitional and remedial programs might be eliminated. These programs are collaborations between adult education and community colleges. They target some of our most in- need students; the students that need extra attention in order to be successful in college. Their success in college will give this population increased access to supportable employment. The transitional and remedial program collaborations are an important piece of a cradle- to -career strategy and support *all* students towards success.

In closing, we at CAHS understand the difficulties in making these hard decisions. We ask that as decisions are being made you take into consideration the impact of each rescission on vulnerable populations and important programs.