



Connecticut  
Early Childhood  
Alliance

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Alliance, Legislators, Advocates Rally to Protect Kids from Budget Cuts**

Members of the CT Early Childhood Alliance joined with Rep. Toni Walker and other legislators to urge lawmakers to protect children from devastating budget cuts that have been proposed by Governor Rell as part of her deficit mitigation plan.

More than \$20 million in cuts have been proposed to early learning programs by the governor, including complete elimination of funding for Community Plans for Early Childhood and Early Literacy funds (which will mean the loss of matching private dollars), the Office of Early Childhood Planning, Outreach and Coordination, which is necessary to meet certain functions for Connecticut to be competitive for federal Early Learning Challenge Grants; and Commission on Children. Big cuts are proposed to state funded child care centers (\$4.5 million, or 28.3% of state funds); Care4Kids child care subsidy (\$10.7 million, or 10.3%); and a \$4.5 million cut to the Children's Trust Fund, a reduction of 33.8%.

It is highly unlikely these cuts will produce real cost savings to the state, said CT Early Childhood Alliance co-chair Juleen Flanigan, director of early childhood services for Western Connecticut's EDUCATION CONNECTION.

“Unemployment will increase. Child care is essential to keep parents working,” said Flanigan. “For low income parents, a child care subsidy is the only reason they can work. Without it, they will be unemployed.”

She also noted that child care programs will cease to exist. The reduction in subsidies proposed by Governor Rell will cause instability into both public and private programs and will result in all-but-certain closures.

“Reducing [the state-funded center's] budget by nearly \$4 million and \$10 million for Care4Kids will cost the state nearly thousands of jobs, including teaching staff and others who keep our centers functioning,” said Kathy Queen, director of Wallingford Community Day Care. “We will put children's lives at risk because without subsidized care, parents will be forced to choose between no care or sub-standard care and paying the rent or the food bill.”

Another major concern with the proposed cuts is leaving public and private matching funds on the table, if the state walks away from its funding commitment.

“The governor's proposed cuts to early childhood community plans, literacy, parent leadership training, and state early childhood planning offices not only negatively impact outcomes for children, but are also going to jeopardize millions of dollars of public and private funding that come in because of these programs,” said Merrill Gay, executive director of the New Britain Discovery Collaborative and co-chair of the CT Early Childhood Alliance. “The \$450,000 for Community Plans for Early Childhood is the state match to funds put up by the Graustein Memorial Fund. Those funds would continue the partnership that over the past 2 years has enabled 23 communities to develop local birth to eight community plans. I can tell you first hand that this process brings new players to the table, sets direction for community work and most importantly in these tough financial times, identifies low cost-no cost strategies.”

Cutting the \$150,000 in Early Literacy funds in effect cuts \$300,000, he added, noting that the funds were intended to pilot an effort that would provide intensive technical assistance to school districts around reading instruction. Merrill Gay also noted that the \$400,000 proposed cut to the Office of Early Childhood Planning, Outreach, and Coordination, the office designed to help Connecticut access multi-million dollars in federal funds, would inhibit the state's ability to meet planning deadlines required to submit a federal application to fund the State Advisory Council as well as the work that needs to be done to field a competitive Early Learning Challenge Grant.

“In other words, by trying to save \$400,000 now, we jeopardize our ability to get substantially more from the federal government,” Merrill Gay said. “The proposed cuts in early literacy, strengthening local community work on early education and parent leadership training programs will immediately eliminate \$4.12 million in private matching funds. And Connecticut's ability to access federal funds will be significantly hampered if these cuts go into effect.”

The CT Early Childhood Alliance is a coalition of parents, providers and early childhood advocates. For more information, visit [www.earlychildhoodalliance.com](http://www.earlychildhoodalliance.com)