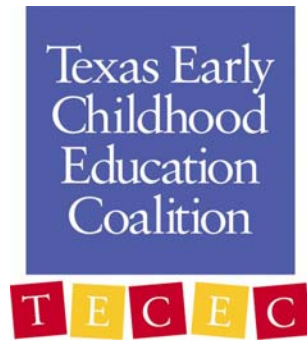


Testimony of:

Kara Johnson
President and CEO
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
(TECEC)



Before the:
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

Good morning. My name is Kara Johnson and I am the President and CEO of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC). TECEC represents more than 350 organizations and 6,000 members and partners from across the great state of Texas. Our partners include representatives from public schools, Head Start, child care, the business community, higher education, foundations, community based organizations, and more. The mission of TECEC is to build a system of quality early education that prepares children in Texas for success in their education and life.

I would like to begin my remarks by thanking Chairman Jane Nelson, Vice Chairman Bob Deuell, and the entire Senate Health and Human Services Committee for hearing my testimony. The purpose of my remarks today is to testify in support of the Committee Substitute (C.S.) for Senate Bill 76 by Senator Jane Nelson. The committee substitute takes into consideration the current budget shortfall as well as the potential cost that could be carried over to providers.

At the same time, the committee substitute also includes the following provisions to combat fraud and prevent serious criminal offenders from providing child care services to children:

- Directs the Department of Family and Protective Services to conduct name-based background checks, abuse/neglect central registry checks and sex offender registry checks on all applicants;
- Authorizes the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to verify that child care services are being provided using an electronic validation system;
- Directs TWC to develop fraud prevention tools and to withhold, stop, or recoup payments as needed to prevent or stop suspected fraud; and
- Limits eligibility to provide paid care in the child's home to circumstances where care is desperately needed.

The Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) would like to thank Senator Nelson for her continued leadership and dedication to ensuring children in Texas are safe and secure. On behalf of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.