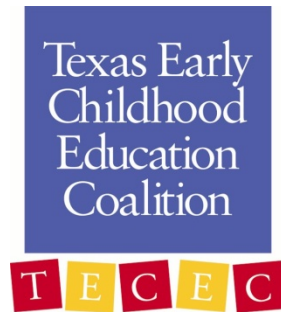


Kara Johnson
President and CEO
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
(TECEC)



Before the:

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Tuesday, April 5, 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 throughout life.

I would like to begin by thanking Chairwoman Jane Nelson, Vice Chairman Robert 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 Senate Bill 1178 by Senator Jane Nelson. We applaud Senator Nelson for recognizing the critical importance of safety in early childhood education and care settings.

Senate Bill 1178 moves Texas closer to ensuring the safety of young children in paid child care. This bill includes many provisions that support safety improvement efforts, including licensing and administrative penalties for child care providers that do not meet standards and requirements set by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). The bill also expands the oversight and enforcement roles of DFPS to ensure that children in care are in well-regulated settings.

We believe that the safety of children in child care settings is the foundation of effective early childhood education settings. Stricter requirements and enforcement of safety regulations and procedures in child care settings supports the goal of all children experiencing high quality early education that prepares them for success in school and beyond. Basic safety standards are the backbone of early education and care, and parents, families and caregivers should be confident that the State and individual child care providers are working collaboratively to guarantee safety in all early education settings. Senate Bill 1178 promotes such collaboration by strengthening regulations that determine how, when, and where safe early education and care practices are in place.

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