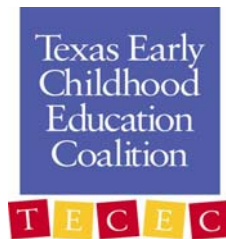


Testimony of:

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(TECEC)



Before the:

House Appropriations Committee
Article III, Texas Education Agency

Monday, February 14, 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.

This morning I am speaking on behalf of TECEC, as well as the Coalition on Pre-k Quality and Accountability. This is a new coalition that was formed during the interim and represents the bipartisan interests of business and education leaders across the great state of Texas. Members of the Coalition include the Texas Association of Business (TAB), Raise Your Hand Texas, the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, the Texas Association of School Boards, the Texas Association of School Administrators, and the National Child Care Coalition.

I would like to begin my remarks by thanking Chairman Scott Hochberg and the entire House Appropriations Subcommittee on Article III for hearing my testimony. The purpose of my remarks today is to acknowledge the incredible progress Texas has made over the past seven years in creating a nationally recognized system of pre-k accountability that has been proven to prepare children to enter kindergarten school ready. I am also here to ask you to continue investing in these proven programs, including the Early Childhood School Readiness Models such as the Texas School Ready Project and the Texas

School Readiness Certification System, as well as the Pre-kindergarten Early Start Grant Programs (PKES).

As each of you take on the difficult task of analyzing each of the various programs that need funding, I thought my time would best be spent today by answering three of the questions that have been coming up most often in our visits with legislative offices so far this session.

#1: The first question we hear is whether or not pre-k reform programs focus on accountability and academic achievement. The good news is the pre-k reform programs demand high quality from school districts, and their partnership programs in child care and Head Start centers by specifying that grantees have to spend money on the following proven school readiness components:

1. High-quality, developmentally appropriate, and rigorous curriculum;
2. Continuous monitoring of student progress in the classroom; and
3. Professional development, including mentoring, to promote student achievement.

As a result, we know these programs drive student achievement, improve educator effectiveness, and ensure accountability. For example, students graduating from Texas School Ready Certified pre-k programs score more than 22 percentage points higher than the statewide average on reading assessments given to them when they get to Kindergarten.

#2: The second question that we hear is whether or not the pre-k reform programs are an efficient use of taxpayer dollars. There is no question as to

the economic benefits of investing in high quality, pre-k reform programs. We now have data from the Bush School of Government at Texas A&M University, two federal reviews, including one launched by the Legislative Budget Board (LBB), and multiple peer reviewed journals as to the efficiency, accountability, and economic benefits of investing in high quality pre-k reform programs. These programs will help each of you on this committee achieve many of your goals this session, including short and long-term economic growth, better prepared children for school, increased high school graduation rates, and a solid workforce in the future.

Each of you can also feel supported from the business community in your support of these pre-k reform programs. As I mentioned earlier today, business leaders from Raise Your Hand Texas and the Texas Association of Business have joined forces this session to build a Coalition on Pre-k Quality and Accountability because leaders from both groups recognize the critical role high quality early education programs play in economic recovery and the future growth of our great state.

Finally, by investing in these high quality pre-k reform programs, Texas is able to draw down an additional \$1.56 from the federal government for every \$1.00 of General Revenue invested in the Early Childhood School Readiness Models.

#3: The third question we hear is whether or not these pre-k reform programs are mandatory. The answer is absolutely not. As each of you know, parents in Texas have the option to keep their children at home until the first

grade. The good news, however, is that parents who choose to enter the workforce and have access to a pre-k reform program in their community, will see their child or children excel and enter kindergarten school ready.

Over the next three months, each of you will have hundreds of office visits and emails from constituents in your districts asking for your support of critical pre-k reform programs. The Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) would like to serve as a resource to each of your offices as other questions arise as to the effectiveness and accountability of these programs. On behalf of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.

According to the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, two federal reviews (including a recent evaluation led by the Legislative Budget Board), and multiple peer reviewed journal articles, **Texas Pre-k Reform Programs** are **EFFICIENT**, **EFFECTIVE**, and lead to **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** in the state of Texas.

EFFICIENT

In general, the per-classroom and per-student costs of the Texas Pre-k Reform Programs (Texas Early Education Model, Texas School Ready Project and the School Readiness Certification Program) have declined each year of the program.

Source: 2010 Legislative Budget Board Evaluation

Sound financial accounting and budget management processes are in place at the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) and controls over grant and contract management ensure that accurate and reliable financial information for the program is maintained.

Source: 2010 Legislative Budget Board Evaluation

EFFECTIVE

Participation in Texas Pre-k Reform Programs has had a positive impact on: literacy instruction, student engagement, improved classroom behavior management, improved mathematics instruction, and more than 70 percent of children participating in the programs achieve school ready status.

Source: 2010 Legislative Budget Board Evaluation

LEAD TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Every **\$1.00** invested in high quality child care, Head Start, and public school pre-k programs returns at least **\$3.50** to local Texas communities. Savings are realized through increased high school graduation rates, fewer children referred to special education, increased college entrance rates, fewer children retained in school, fewer children entering the juvenile and adult justice systems, and a stronger workforce and Texas economy.

Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University