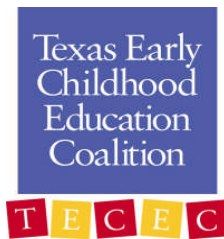


Testimony of:

Kara Johnson
Executive Director
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
(TECEC)



Before the:

House Committee on Public Education

House Bill 635

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

Good afternoon. My name is Kara Johnson and I am the Executive Director of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC). TECEC represents more than 275 organizations and thousands of members 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. I would like to begin my remarks by thanking Chair Eissler and the entire House Committee on Public Education for hearing my testimony. In addition, I would like to thank Representative Guillen and Representative Rodriguez for authoring this critical piece of legislation.

The purpose of my remarks today is to support House Bill 635 which would ensure that Head Start programs in Texas that are operated by a school district or community-based organization can serve the function of an elementary school in order to qualify for federal grant funding, such as the Schools and Libraries Program, also known as the “E-Rate Program.”

The E-Rate Program is absolutely critical to the more than 67,000 children served in Head Start in Texas every year. There are 86 Head Start programs in Texas that ensure children are receiving a high quality early education, as well as critical services such as dental, health, and nutrition.

Because E-Rate is not a grant program but instead a discount program, Head Start would not take funding away from school districts that are already eligible. As a result, TECEC strongly encourages the passage of this critical piece of legislation. On behalf of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.