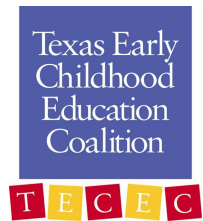


Dr. Donald J. Smith, Jr.

Testimony to the Committee on Health & Human Services
Senate for the state of Texas



Senator Nelson and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Dr. Donald Smith. I am the Director of Research and Public Policy for the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition representing 275 agencies and 1000 members. Please allow me a moment to thank you for this opportunity to offer TECEC's support of Senator Lucio's SB 1613 which recognizes the vital need for an Early Childhood Behavioral Consultation Program in the state of Texas.

Each year, thousands of pre-kindergarten children across this state suffer emotional and behavioral problems, struggle academically, exhibit signs of developmental delays and face disciplinary action in child care and classroom facilities. For many providers, expulsion is perceived to be the answer to the problems of these children.

In the 2003-2004 school year, 662 Texas pre-k students were expelled from their programs. Similar trends are seen across the country where very young children are expelled for behavioral causes without addressing the underlying causes of the behaviors.

The behavioral consultant program is an effort to go beyond the disciplinary responses and focus upon the behaviors and their causative factors.

Through efforts directed by a trained professional, addresses many of the issues facing the child, their family and the provider/educator. Behavioral consultants offer a level of expertise that in response to the behavioral problems

During this 81st Legislative Session, there has been a focus upon the need for quality child care services in Texas. We applaud Senator Lucio for recognizing the need for changes to the minimum training standards. SB 1730 makes great strides toward the establishment of criteria for training

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that recognizes the need for a highly educated and well trained child care workforce in the state.

However, we have also heard the concerns of the members of the legislature as well as the partners of TECEC regarding the limitations that we, as a state, face because of the downturn in the economy. This compromise enhances the current standards and still moves the requirements for early education training forward toward a day when resources are more abundant. TECEC supports SB1730 and applauds Senator West for introducing this vital legislation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer this testimony. I will gladly take your questions.