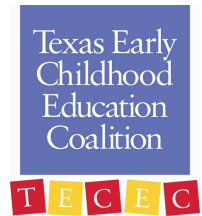


Dr. Donald J. Smith, Jr.
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
Testimony to the Texas Workforce Commission



My name is Dr. Donald Smith. I am the Director of Research and Public Policy for the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) representing 275 agencies and 4000 members. Our Coalition members include educators, administrators, child care providers and parents who recognize the great value in quality child care and early education.

I thank you for this opportunity to offer TECEC's testimony regarding the Texas Workforce Commission's proposed Child Care Development Fund Plan for Texas FFY 2010-2011. TECEC appreciates the efforts of the Texas Workforce Commission to provide this vital service for children and families across the state of Texas. Further, we recognize that this document is evidence of the highly complex nature of the subsidized child care service delivery system in the state of Texas.

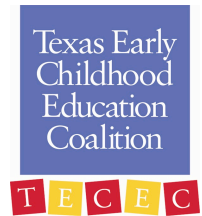
Throughout this 81st Legislature, there has been a focus upon efforts to improve the quality of child care services in Texas by members of both the House and the Senate. TECEC and its members from across the state have worked tirelessly to support these efforts. Today, we are offering testimony to bring your attention to our key concerns facing the subsidized child care system in this state.

First, child care providers are dedicated individuals who care deeply about the children in their care. However, many lack sufficient pre-service and ongoing training to effectively deliver the highest quality services. Quality programs like the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM), Texas Rising Star,

and the Texas School Readiness Program are recognized by the TWC as a means of addressing the needs of the professionals who are at the forefront in the care of the children of Texas. In addition, new and promising opportunities like the TEACH model loom on the horizon for early childhood initiatives. These initiatives, recognized by the CCDF Plan for FFY 2010-2011 for their quality, offer a remedy to the valid concerns of the child care community with the potential to produce long term benefits to children, families and the workforce of the future.

These same programs also offer a quality early childhood education that is supported by years of scientific research. Developed to help prepare young children entering the K-12 education system, they have been shown to be highly effective. Reading and math performance in the early elementary grades for children exiting the quality early childhood programs has been significantly improved over their age matched classmates who were not enrolled in similar quality childcare / preschool programs.

Finally, current reimbursement rates from local workforce boards are set well below the market rates of the communities that are served by local providers. Because of the disparities between established workforce rates and community based market rates, providers face many dilemmas as they struggle to deliver quality services. For example, financial limitations hinder the ability of community providers to attract and retain the best trained and most educated professionals that are available. Additionally, the lack of resources limits the ability of providers to acquire the state of the art



equipment and adequate supplies needed to deliver the quality programs like TEEM and Texas Rising Star.

The TWC has an opportunity to address each of these issues through the CCDF Plan for 2010-2011. The availability of federal stimulus funds, including the set aside for quality programs, has afforded the state of Texas an opportunity to enhance the existing services available to many families. Use of the funds to increase reimbursement rates and enhance the quality of services will go further toward quality education and care than expanding the number of slots in a system that is struggling to survive.

I thank you for this opportunity to present our case for enhancing the quality of care in Texas. We recognize the tough choices that you, the members of the Texas Workforce Commission, face as you put forth the plan for 2010-2011. We encourage you to consider the benefits of expanded quality services and increased reimbursement rates for the thousands of children and families currently served in this state.