
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ABBOTT SUBCOMMITTEE

“Early Childhood Education”

LOCATION: Metropolitan Baptist Church
Newark, New Jersey

DATE: March 17, 1999
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator William L. Gormley, Co-Chair
Senator Ronald L. Rice
Senator Norman M. Robertson
Assemblyman Raul “Rudy” Garcia

ALSO PRESENT:

Senator Robert J. Martin
District 26

Assemblyman Craig A. Stanley
District 28

Melanie M. Schulz, Executive Director
Joint Committee on the Public Schools



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Audrey West Executive Director Newark Preschool Council, Inc.	5
Barbara Anderson Assistant Commissioner Division of Student Services New Jersey Department of Education	9
Xiomara Guevara Representing La Casa Don Pedro	16
Carol Besler President New Jersey Child Care Association	20
Cecilia Zalkin Associate Director The Association for Children of New Jersey	29
Gayle Kloepfer Executive Director SWN Corporation and Chairperson State of New Jersey Contracted Child Care Centers	32
Steven Block Director School Reform Initiatives Education Law Center	33
Trish Morris Yamba Executive Director Newark Day Center	51
Veronica E. Ray Representing New Jersey Head Start Association	57

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Audrey Fletcher Chairperson Education and Information Committee New Jersey Head Start Association	59
Marion Bolden Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Newark Public Schools	64
APPENDIX:	
Position paper submitted by Gayle Kloepfer	1x
Testimony plus attachment submitted by Steven Block	4x
Testimony submitted by Thomas Zsiga Chairman New Jersey Child Care Advisory Council	17x
Testimony submitted by Robert M. Farley Executive Director Unified Vailsburg Services Organization	20x
Statement submitted by Lorraine Cooke, Ed.D. New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children	23x

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Page

SENATOR WILLIAM L. GORMLEY (Co-Chair): I'd like to welcome everyone. I'd like to thank you all for attending today.

First of all, a member of this Committee who unfortunately can't be here today, Senator Baer, underwent angioplasty just yesterday from what I understand. But there have been sincere expressions of concern about his health. He is doing fine. He has already given 73 hypotheticals to the nurses at the hospitals (laughter), and they are pulling their hair out going, "When is he going back to the Senate?" So Byron is fine. We want to make that health update.

My name is Senator Bill Gormley. To my left is Senator Norm Robertson. The host Senator for today, Senator Ron Rice. Mayor and Assemblyman Garcia is here today. He will have to be leaving -- well, he has to leave for a very important task.

It's the Irishman of the year award you will be presenting. I certainly understand that, so that's a very acceptable excuse.

We have a varied list of witnesses to testify. I'd like to make a brief opening statement and let the Committee members make whatever statement they choose to.

Assemblyman Stanley -- excuse me -- is also here. Oh, and Senator Martin. I am very sorry.

So what we'd like to do is why don't we have the members make any comments they might like to. We have 38 witnesses, so I'm very happy with the turnout and with the interest.

I would just like to-- My opening comment is this destroys the stereotype of the old church basement, I'll tell you that. This is quite a facility.

Senator Robertson.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No, no comment really except to thank everybody for coming out this morning. We are very, very interested in hearing what everybody has to say. We are charged-- (pauses)

Oh, okay, that's the one that actually projects. (referring to PA microphone)

I was just saying we are very, very interested in hearing what everybody has to say. We are charged with a very important responsibility, and that is making the suggestions that will chart the future of school funding and education, in essence, certainly urban education, in the decades to come. So the work that you are doing out in the field is greatly appreciated, and the input that you are going to give us this morning is even appreciated more.

Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN: Like Senator Gormley, it's a terrific facility. Some of us who live in the suburbs don't get a chance to see as much of Newark as we should. Even though I work in the city, I haven't been--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: We can't hear you.

SENATOR MARTIN: I'm impressed by the facility. I'm here to learn, and I'll let it go that.

Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Ron.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning to everyone.

Let me thank the Senate Chairman of the Education Committee and Joint Committee on Public Schools for, number one, putting together subcommittees. And let me thank Senator Gormley for taking this interest as Chairman of the *Abbott v. Burke* Committee, but also the early childhood education and thank him for his second visit, I think, in the last 45 days to the city of Newark. There is a strong interest.

And I just want to encourage our constituency base here to be honest on the record. Let them know what you're doing. And what we're trying to establish is a model for early childhood education as we move forward to mandate up in New Jersey's State Supreme Court.

Once again, thank you, and let me welcome my colleagues from the Assembly as well as the Senate. In closing, let me also thank Audrey West and her staff of Head Start for help coordinating and particularly thank Reverend Jefferson and his people here at the church -- his administrative staff -- for being so kind to house us in such a lovely facility.

And I just want to tell my colleagues, before you leave, the houses across the street are not town houses that we purchased. Those are public housing.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Senator.

I want to also thank the Chairman for convening the meeting here. I also want to thank Senator Rice for insisting that meetings be held here in an *Abbott* district, in Newark, where there is a tremendous need and also a tremendous responsibility on the part of the State with the Supreme Court having actually given up jurisdiction over the *Abbott vs. Burke* case. It's the

Legislature that really has to be the watchdog. The administration is charged with implementing early childhood, so it's going to be incumbent upon us to be very vigilant in making certain that the needs of the children are met and that we have an effective and efficient early childhood education program.

Again, I commend the panel. I commend everyone for coming out because this is indeed a tremendous turnout. And we've had several meetings on the issue, so I know there are a lot of issues on early childhood, and I just want to make sure we have time, so I'm going to cut my comments brief and pass them on to Rudy Garcia.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Thank you very much.

First of all, I'd like to also commend Senator Gormley for his efforts, and he has also said that we are going to have more meetings like this in other *Abbott* districts, and really this is what we need. We need the input and the dialogue and really get into our neighborhoods and our communities to talk about the issues with real people.

I come here today not only as an Assemblyman that represents four *Abbott* districts, but also with a different perspective, and that is the Mayor of Union City, which is also an *Abbott* district. And one of the things that we all have in common is that we have a once in a lifetime opportunity -- certainly an opportunity that has not come our way as long as I'm alive, and certainly not as long as anyone else here is alive -- is that finally we are going to have an opportunity to have our children have the same type of educational opportunities as those people who live in other areas of the state that may be more affluent.

But along with the opportunity comes a real challenge. And that challenge is ours to make sure that the programs that we implement really will serve the children and really will make them ready to learn in the early childhood education program and work with a spirit of cooperation. Because one of the things that we do not need to get into -- and I think Senator Gormley and I were talking about this before was that we do not need to get into a fight in between maybe those in the educational community and those in the Head Start programs or the day care providers, but rather let's work together to make sure this program really meets the needs of our children.

So with that I just wanted to thank everyone for coming. I'm very impressed by the turnout, and hopefully we will have the opportunity to have this meeting in Union City, and all of you could join as there as well.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR GORMLEY: I'd just like to acknowledge somebody who wanted to be here today and has been as accessible as possible given that he is the mist of a transition, Dave Hespe, head of Department of Education. His representative, Barbara Anderson, is here today, who is the individual vested with the responsibility of monitoring these issues and working with Dave. So the Department is well represented and also here listening today.

We'd like to call for the first witness, Audrey West, Newark Preschool Council, Executive Director.

AUDREY WEST: Good morning and welcome to the city of Newark. My name, as you just heard, is Audrey West, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Newark Preschool Council Head Start Program. For the past 34 years, the Council has been the largest Head Start agency in New Jersey.

Over these years we have served more than 60,000 children and their families. Today we operate 49 Head Start sites throughout the five wards of Newark. Of the approximately 2500 children we are funded to serve, 1900 are four-year-olds, while more than 600 are three-year-olds.

I am especially pleased to address you this morning because, like many of my colleagues in Newark and throughout the 28 *Abbott* communities, I believe that we are on the verge of a great leap forward in the provision of high-quality preschool. For this progress to occur, however, it is critical for you as legislators to understand the needs of our children and the needs of the child care and Head Start programs that serve them.

Although the State apparently denied the school district of Newark the opportunity to participate in the Rutgers early childhood study, I can tell you that our experience at the Newark Preschool Council confirms much of the data presented to you by doctors Barnett and Frede. Our children come to us far behind children in wealthy suburban communities. At ages three and four they are vulnerable, incredibly impressionable, and, most importantly, filled with curiosity.

Although many show signs of the disadvantages we see more clearly in their older siblings, because they are so young, they are capable of considerable affective and cognitive learning. Such learning is most likely to occur, however, when the curriculum is developmentally appropriate, when teachers are strong and pedagogy, content, and discipline, and when student emotional, health, and social needs are satisfied. Some early childhood experts have observed that it is even more crucial that preschool teachers receive the highest training and demonstrate the strongest practice precisely because at

three and four years old our preschoolers are forming their foundation for later learning.

Head Start in Newark, throughout New Jersey, and indeed throughout this country does an amazing job responding to the needs of children and their families, so too our colleagues in day care and child care. Indeed, the Newark Preschool Council has received many national awards for outstanding service over the years. But while we stretch our limited dollars and accomplish more than dollar restrictions would normally permit, the plain truth is that we are not able to do all that our children need.

Our facilities are not uniformly of high quality, such as Newark Preschool Head Start has here at this site, where we have five state-of-the-art Head Start classrooms accommodating 100 children in space that we lease from the church. Moreover, we are rarely able to reduce class size to 15, the number recommended in research to establish a more manageable environment for our children and our staff. Our staff does a great job, yet many have not had the full range of training they need, and most do not earn the salaries they deserve. Of our 86 teachers, 8 are fully certified, another 15 have bachelor's degrees, 7 have the associate degree, and the remaining 56 hold the child development associate credential.

We simply do not have the resources necessary to help our teachers and assistant teachers return to higher education or to provide the level and intensity of professional development they richly deserve or to establish a pool of highly trained substitutes to facilitate further training and professional development of our regular staff. And, most important, we do not have the resources necessary to provide sufficient extended-day and full-year

services so many of our children need for their development and our parents need to support their full-time participation in the workforce.

Today, we are able to provide full-day services to only about 50 percent of our children. We do not provide extended day other than on a very limited basis or full-year services.

As many of my colleagues in the child care community have argued for years, the children need a seamless extended-day and full-year program where play, nutrition, and formal learning activities are all coordinated and reinforced effective and cognitive growth throughout the day. The children need consistent patterns in their interactions with adults, each other, and the routines of daily participation in preschool activities. Moreover, such program coverage is essential in the age of welfare reform when parents are no longer available to transport their children from one location to another or to supervise the time during the day when the children are not in a program.

Historically, we have not had the resources to provide fully for the needs of our children or our staff. We are hopeful that as we move towards a more faithful response to the requirements of the Supreme Court, the State will come to recognize the critical importance of the high educational standards the court established.

We hope you will provide the funding all of us in the Head Start and child care communities need to assure the transition from where programs are now to where they can be if you provide the funding to meet the high court standards. What is essential is that in every community the development process includes, first, a full comprehensive assessment of the needs of children, and, second, a similarly comprehensive assessment of the readiness

and needs of participating Head Start and child care centers. Only then will we be able to identify the program components, intensity, duration, and improvements needed to respond both to what our children need and what the Court has required. Then, and only then, will we be able to determine the level of funding needed by each program, by each community, and by the state as a whole.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. We invite you to visit our Head Start classrooms before you leave this site. (applause)

SENATOR GORMLEY: Were there any questions? (no response)

Barbara Anderson, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Education.

ASST. COMMISSIONER BARBARA ANDERSON:

Good morning.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Good morning.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Good morning to Senator Gormley and members of the Joint Committee. I welcome this opportunity to come before you today to testify on early childhood education.

Recently, Commissioner designate, Dave Hespe, made a series of observations regarding the potential elements of a successful early childhood program to the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Committee for their consideration. I would like to share those eight considerations with you at this time.

First of all, a full-day full-year program.

Secondly, an early childhood program with sufficient staff. He recommended to the Committee that providers be given some flexibility on

this issue, such as allowing either a ration of 15 children to one teacher and one aid, or 20 children to one teacher and two aids.

Third, appropriately trained teaching staff. And he recommended four areas. The Committee developed criteria and a process to recognize the talents and accomplishments of early childhood staff currently employed by a community provider by providing a waiver to these staff members so long as they complete the requirements for child development associate, CDA, certification within three years.

After the phase-in all early childhood teachers working with three and four-year-olds at both school- and community-based providers, except those exempted, hold the Department of Education-issued teacher certification with appropriate endorsement. It is imperative that any requirement for certified teachers be phased in to reflect the need to establish a pool of qualified candidates that all *Abbott* districts can use. Such a pool does not currently exist. This phase-in will coincide with a phase in the preschool programs.

The Department of Education will work with the education and higher education communities to establish programs to assist districts in locating certified staff and provide assistance to candidates in locating tuition and other assisting programs to achieve certification.

Fourth area, under existing State law it is likely that criminal background checks will be required of all staff in both community- and school-based programs. It is suggested that this be done during the course of the 1999-2000 school year.

Fifth, coordination with health and social service programs available to the community as provided, including enrollment in KidCare programs.

Sixth, programs comply with programmatic standards that will be established to ensure articulation with the core curriculum and whole school reform initiatives through developmentally appropriate educational practices.

Seventh, school districts use existing community-based providers to the fullest extent possible so long as the provider is licensed by the Department of Human Services and has the potential to meet the criteria specified, including Head Start programs.

Eight, in order to ensure adequate facilities, expansion of space and existing community-based providers will be available through the Bright Beginnings II. Facilities for necessary school-based programs could be developed through districts' five-year facilities management plans. He recommended to the Committee that the overriding goal must be quality. A phase-in was proposed to ensure a qualified teacher pool, development of necessary standards, an accountability and evaluation system, and adequate facilities. Our goal should be to have all four-year-olds in *Abbott* districts served in full-day preschool programs meeting the above criteria by the 2001-2002 school year and all three-year-olds served in the 2003-2004 school year.

With regard to the 1999-2000 school year, all *Abbott* districts should continue to comply with the guidelines developed by the Department of Education regarding the provision of half-day programs. This next year will serve as a foundation upon which to plan for a common goal of quality full-day full-year programs in the *Abbott* districts by 2003-2004. Therefore, the

Department's review of these plans, including supplemental funding requests, will remain unchanged for the 1999-2000 school year.

Thank you again for giving me this opportunity. And, of course, at this time, I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Senator Rice.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, I'm going to try to keep my questions and comments at a minimum, because we have a long list. But I think there are certain people I need to respond to, at least talk to, and certainly the Department of Education to be talked to.

I've spoken with the new Commissioner. I know he is transitioning. But for the record -- this recorded record -- and for your notes to take back, I think that the elements raised here are very good, and I'd like to have a copy of your comments through the Committee Chair, as well as without (indiscernible) to the Committee in reference to him.

But I'm not sure in your comments if I heard the kind of connection that I want to hear. I am going to be somewhat adamant about regardless of what the State model comes out to be, there has got to be a connection in my personal estimation of Head Start as well as day care. And there has to be a strong parental component. (applause) And I really believe that the commissioners and the educators and even legislators in many time, who don't have to deal with the kinds of day care providers we deal with in Head Start, don't understand that there is a very serious and very committed parental involvement in those two arenas. And some get paid, some volunteer.

And I truly believe and I'm glad to hear certified participants for

maybe every 15 youngsters, because that's what my bill says. My bill also said \$100 million, but we will talk about that later.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: But the point is that they care, and hopefully the speakers from day care will at least articulate it. I want it clear to the State that we know that day care does a wonderful job. They don't have the resources, but they have the population we need, and many of them have the facilities we need. It's just that we don't need to disturb some of the things they are doing. We need to find operational balance to add to them, which will save us dollars on the capital side, because I know we are going to run into a building construction problem with the number of buildings that will be necessary.

And I believe that in Newark alone -- just for your information. I would hope you would do research in these *Abbott* districts. Particularly, I believe with the population we are serving there is still about 9000 youngsters in the group that we are talking about that is going unserved. And I think that when Ms. West and other speakers want to go on beyond 3:00 that it will be a great contradiction to the legislators in Governor Whitman's statement about transitioning from welfare to work.

So I just want to be on record with that because I want to be a friend of the new Commissioner. I know him, not an adversary. But I need to sit down early because you are presently in a very fine facility. This was structured to deal with early childhood education. You know, the congregation here and the ministers and everybody knew where they wanted to go. We're not all structured this way, but this a takeover district. So I want to make sure

that we don't miss anything in the process, and I want to be intricate as well as very much an intimate part of what the public Department of Education does. I don't want it secondhanded from my district, which also includes Irvington.

Okay, so I just want to put that on the record since we are recording, so no one can say that I never made those statements up front as we craft the model or listen and go on with the rest of my colleagues.

Thank you very much.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Thank you, Senator Rice. (applause)

I think I can speak for Commissioner designate Dave Hesse and say that we agree with your comments. We agree with and support the collaboration with Head Start and child care providers. We strongly support expanding and building on the existing system. The Governor's initiative also supports strengthening the parental involvement component by establishing a position called a family worker, which would work with one family worker to every 40 children and family so that we can support and expand parental involvement. So, yes, we agree with and support your comments.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Chairman.

I want to just echo the comments of Senator Rice with respect to parental involvement. And I think we can start by including parents more. You know, you can't have involvement unless you have inclusion. Let's have inclusion in the developmental stages of the programs. Let's provide parents

with the necessary resources so that they can be active participants (applause) and not come in at a disadvantage.

The other thing is I would be remiss, really, if I did not say that child care does not equate with quality prekindergarten programs with quality early education programs. I mean, I think our child care providers do a tremendous job in doing what they do; however, we must be diligent as legislators to make sure that we distinguish between child care and early childhood education. There is a difference and we need to make sure that (applause) we do as much as we can to ensure that students are getting what the Supreme Court mandated, education -- pre-K education -- that they need to make a difference.

If we just go along with current child care, what we'll end up with is the same types of results that we've had throughout the years. What we are trying to do is improve upon that. I recognize your comments as that, yes, we want to move in that direction. I think that we must move in that direction posthaste. We can't afford to wait.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR GORMLEY: Any other questions or comments or comments from the Committee? (no response)

Thank you.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: I would hope that everyone will please bear with me if I mispronounce a name, okay. I'm a very poor reader sometimes. (laughter)

The representative of the Newark Tenant Council.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Mr. Chairman,
I pass on that.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Okay.

It sounds like one of those national conventions. You are going
to move to the next state.

Xiomara Guevara, L.A. Casa--

SENATOR RICE: Is that La Casa Don Pedro?

SENATOR GORMLEY: I messed that up.

SENATOR MARTIN: He's just in from California so you have--

SENATOR GORMLEY: I'm sorry.

X I O M A R A G U E V A R A: Good morning. My name is Xiomara
Guevara from La Casa Don Pedro.

Very briefly, Mr. Ray Ocasier (phonetic spelling), our executive
director, was supposed to be here to deliver the testimony; unfortunately, he
couldn't make it this morning because, as you all know, as an executive
director you have a million things to do. However, he will mail in his
testimony.

Just briefly, I work with the FACES Program at La Casa, the
Family and Children's Early Educational Services. And just in terms of the
inclusion that we were just talking about, I think it is very important to
remember that when we are trying to include the parents, to please do it
bilingually.

La Casa, if you don't know who we are -- we have been in the
north section of Newark for over 27 years, and we are one of the leading
agencies to serve the Latinos in Newark. And one of our problems has been

that a lot of programs come out, but they are not targeted in the language barriers to our community.

And that is basically what I have to say this morning. Mr. Ocasier will deliver the testimony, and he will be more detailed on other issues.

SENATOR GORMLEY: If I may.

MS. GUEVARA: Sure.

SENATOR GORMLEY: In terms of the program, just for the idea. The number of children in the program--

MS. GUEVARA: Okay.

SENATOR GORMLEY: If we could just get a simple overview of the program, so people know a little bit more about it.

MS. GUEVARA: Okay. La Casa services many different areas. We do have a day care, and I think in our day care -- the director is here -- and I think we have about 100 children in the preschool. And then along with my program we serve the zero to six age range with the parents and children involved. And that's about 60 families also a year.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Senator, if I may.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: (comment indiscernible) --that one of the important components is not only for this, Senator, but in many of the-- When you are reaching out to community groups, and especially now when you're talking about the early childhood education, there is a large component of this population that is Hispanic. Many of them are not fully familiar with the language. If we do not reach out -- and Commissioner Anderson understands the need for bilingual education. We've been down this route for

quite a number of years of now. That we do not reach out to all the different components in our society, so if we can work on that I'd appreciate it, Commissioner.

Thank you very much for your testimony.

MS. GUEVARA: Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman. I only have a--

Unless La Casa had changed over the years, I believe your 100 student population is all Latinos. Is that correct?

MS. GUEVARA: The majority are, but we do have--

SENATOR RICE: And the reason I raised this because the need is so great. We have a very large diversity here in the city of Newark. For example, Senators and Assembly persons, a lot of people think the east and west are the most diverse community in Newark. It's not true. It's the west ward where I live. And the reason being is that you have 10 buildings with 17-plus floors that house 10,000 people and only, for my colleagues, about 300 or 400 registered voters. So that tells you right there what the diversity is.

I believe (indiscernible) had some at one time like 101 languages or something. Now I know we can't address all that because English is the basic language, but if you are going to involve parents, sometimes they don't speak the language.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: But my point is that these day care facilities, I believe, in the future, as we address early childhood education, whether people like it or not are going to wind up having more diversity to them

because you're not going to get around that. You are not going to be able to have an African-American center for every African-American group, Caucasian, Latino, Asian family. So I think as we move through a model, we better be cognizant of the diversity in the state as we move to districts and set it up and have a plan to address that.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Well, as an example, the last time we were in Newark about four or five weeks ago we encouraged New Hope Baptist to get together with Catholic Social Services in Newark, in terms of the delivery of certain services. And they are working on that now. And it's two well-meaning groups working very hard, and they might be next door to one another, but sometimes you don't cross-reference what might be obvious to certain people. And now they are working on some projects together, and that's the type of cross-referencing we are talking about.

But there is well-meaning people in a variety of areas dealing with these issues. If we can merge their efforts in a very positive fashion, I think it really helps the State, and it really helps the community out.

Thank you very much.

Raymond Roberts, Newark Advisory Board.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: He will pass, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Well, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: I'll yield the balance of my time.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Please, I get emotional when you do that.

(laughter) I won't say what happened the last time I was in Newark.

Carol Besler, New Jersey Child Care Association.

C A R O L B E S L E R: Good morning everyone and thank you for this opportunity to speak today. My name is Carol Besler, and I'm the President of the New Jersey Child Care Association. The New Jersey Child Care Association is a trade association in this state, representing the Department of Human Services-licensed child care and early education centers in New Jersey. I'm also a teacher certified in early childhood education with 17 years of experience in child care and preschool education, as well as a business owner operating four child care centers in New Jersey. Two of my centers are in the Trenton *Abbott* district. And, finally, I am a parent of three children and a taxpayer in this state.

The New Jersey Child Care Association strongly supports the utilization of existing licensed child care, based child care centers, within the provision of preschool services in the *Abbott* districts.

Before I begin, I want to state that the NJCCA supports an incremental approach to implementing preschool education in school districts because preschool programs are optional in New Jersey. Parents have a choice whether to keep their child at home or to send them to an early childhood education program. This includes kindergarten which is still an optional program under State law. Mandated education in this state does not begin until the age of six. That means, yes, the *Abbott* districts must offer full-day kindergarten and preschool programs; however, it is still the parents' choice whether or not to send their children to these programs.

As a parent, I can't over emphasize how important parental choice is, especially in the *Abbott* districts and especially what we heard from Senator Rice just a few minutes ago. Parents want to be able to have the choice of what

kinds of programs they want to send their children to. Whether they are culturally based, religiously based, Head Start, private preschools, they want to have that choice in this state, and we've heard it over and over and over from parents and they need to be involved in their children's education and be able to make that choice.

Let me talk you also about Carol Besler the certified teacher. As I stated earlier, I am a teacher certified in early childhood education in this state. What that means is I have a degree and have taken two three-credit courses in early childhood education at an approved institution of higher education. I can say from experience that these two three-credit courses at an approved institution of higher education did not train me to deal with the education, safety, and nurturing of very young children. The most valuable piece of my education was through proper mentoring and classroom experience and continued professional development as well as my certificate.

Proper mentoring and classroom experience are vital components of a qualified early childhood educator. For this reason, the NJCCA can only support certification of teachers as long as the certification includes more intensive, appropriate curriculum classroom experience and mentoring with an experienced trainer, far above what is currently offered in this state and certainly above the old early childhood education endorsement. We cannot allow certified teachers that are certified in this state nursery through eighth grade to work with three- and four-year-olds without one course in early childhood education or one hour of experience working with children under the age of six.

Another concern for the New Jersey Child Care Association is the fact that New Jersey's institutes of higher education do not currently offer an early childhood certification program for the bachelor of art's degree recipient. Even if an institution of higher education in this state decided to set up this type of program, it takes an average of two years to get the program going. As a result, there is no pool of qualified college applicants to choose from unless we decide to higher N through eight certified teachers with no experience dealing with our youngest and most vulnerable students. Again we cannot put a certified N through eight teacher in a classroom with three- and four-year-olds without proper mentoring and training.

Keep in mind that many, many, three-year-olds in this state are not potty trained. Many have special diets, they need a nap, they want their blanket, they want their mother, or a host of other things that happen, and I can tell you from experience as a certified teacher nothing I learned during my degree program prepared me for the first day of school when I had 20 three-year-olds crying and all wanted their mommy at the same time. (applause)

SENATOR GORMLEY: It sounds like our caucus. (laughter)

MS. BESLER: Now, let me talk to you about Carol Besler the parent. All the early childhood research shows that when parents are choosing early childhood programs, they rank safety first, nurturing second, and education third when they are deciding to choose an early childhood program for their three- and four-year-olds. We need to let parents choose where they want their children to be sent. We need to empower parents to make correct choices, to go around to visit programs, and to decide what is best for their children. They exercise choice for a variety of reasons. Many parents do not

have transportation and need a provider close to their home or place of employment. Other parents want their children exposed to teachers who can relate to their cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. Whatever the reason, a parent knows her child or his child the best and must be involved in the preschool education choice of their child.

I'd like to speak to Carol Besler the business owner. I pay taxes to the State of New Jersey on my four centers. I employ New Jersey residents at my centers. My license and qualified child care centers are businesses. Strictly in dollars and cents they cannot compete with a free taxpayer-funded preschool system operated by local school districts. Further, I hold firmly to the belief that expensive new preschool programs and services operated by a school district are not necessarily better programs than those that already exist. There are many programs that are of the highest quality in this state. Many are licensed and have national credentials and accreditation. To put these centers out of business by causing them to compete with the local school district is not good for New Jersey's economy.

The Governor's plan calls for collaboration so this does not happen. However, if you do not ensure that the dollars flow to the community providers to address staffing, salary, and credential needs, we will be put out of business. The employee pool is so small at this juncture, we do not know where these employees are going to come from.

As a taxpayer, I believe that licensed community-based child care centers should be the first option for all parents when choosing a preschool education program. As I stated earlier, this program is still an optional program in this state. As a result, the taxpayer will be better served when

school districts contract with existing licensed child care centers. Licensed child care centers have flexibility. If enrollment falls below expectations and our best guess estimates licensed child care community providers can adjust their salary, their staffing, and their facility size to meet the actual enrollments. School districts do not have this flexibility. Once a teacher is hired at a particular salary or a building is built, those individuals or buildings become part of the establishment. As a result, the taxpayers could be paying for programs, teachers, or buildings that are not being used for the purpose they were intended.

As legislators, you're responsible for balancing the many interests I spoke of today. It is incumbent upon you to ensure the preschool programming embraces the qualified licensed child care and early education community. Whether you are talking about a child safety, care, or education, or parent choice the best option is the community provider.

Finally, as a business owner and taxpayer, let's build New Jersey's economy by providing the private sector with the opportunity to provide these much needed services, let's not create a system that will put quality centers out of business in favor of a taxpayers-supported system in the public schools.

Thank you very much. (applause)

SENATOR GORMLEY: Any questions from members of the Committee?

SENATOR RICE: Just very quickly, a quick comment to you, ma'am, because I now see we are dealing with the private side verses somebody -- the nonprofits. Let me just say I don't think anyone who serves the nation needs to be a part of business, but I do firmly believe that what we structure

should be in line with a cooperative effort with the board of educations. So if you are talking contractual relationships, or whatever, I just think there is a relationship there, particularly for public dollars, etc., to address the need.

The other thing is that I think all of the people here, and the rest of us who are involved, with an understanding of the needs of our young people and moving in the future with early childhood education the Legislature can't do it. We are going to have to change parents' attitudes because when someone tells me that parents rank safety first, nurturing second, and education third, the attitude has got to be that there are no rankings of those three, they are equal. (applause)

Because you can have safety and don't educate a youngster. We're right back where we started. If we don't nurture that youngster we have no future. So I think it's incumbent upon all of us, when parents say, "I'm concerned about safety first," change their minds: no, you need to be concerned equally about safety, nurturing, education. And I think if we start to promulgate that subliminally, we are going to get people to understand you don't separate those components. If you do, you are going to have a failed system just like you don't separate (indiscernible) society, in terms of a system. So I just want to at least put that on the record, okay.

MS. BESLER: Thank you for your comments. (applause)

SENATOR GORMLEY: Senator Robertson.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes, I just have one question. You had made a distinction -- actually not a distinction so much as you pointed out that you were looking forward to the possibility of two types of choice. One is the choice of whether or not to enroll your child in a program, which is the

way it works now. That may or may not survive depending on what happens. And the other one is giving the parents the choice of providers of service. And I just wanted to pass along to you, unless you have some immediate response to it, that I would be very interested in finding out what sorts of models you would be interested in seeing in terms of providing that choice. As you know, there are a number of questions that are involved with that typically, including constitutional ones. So if there is something that your organization, or your national organization, has done some thinking about and might be able to suggest as a model, I would be very interested.

MS. BESLER: Well, actually, Senator, right here in this state we do have a model which our organization is very happy with. It's being run in Plainfield, which is not an *Abbott* district, but an ECPA district, where they have allowed parents to have choice through a voucher program -- which we already in this state do have a voucher program set up for our New Jersey Work First children, as well as some of the other people who receive vouchers.

And what they do in Plainfield is that is run in conjunction with the public school with an overseer in their early childhood department who goes out and decides which community-based providers the district wants to do business with and then allows the parent the choice of choosing from maybe 10 providers that the district has said these are the schools that we want to do business with. So we are very happy with the Plainfield Model, and I can certainly give you more information with that.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes, and I would certainly be interested. And one of the notes I made to myself-- There was a recent

conference of public schools and the Superintendent of Plainfield made a variety of statements, and I was very interested in what they had to do. Because one of the things that I think we should be looking at as a Committee is not only what happens in *Abbott* districts, but also what happens in successful districts that might otherwise have demographics that are similar to some of the *Abbott* districts. What is it that separates a successful district from an unsuccessful district? It's not just a question of *I* and *J* districts verses districts that have systemic poverty problems. And so we really should be looking to successful models. I would be very interested in knowing more about it.

MS. BESLER: Okay, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Senator, if I may, just one last point.

SENATOR GORMLEY: One last.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Okay.

In your testimony, you said none of our State colleges or universities offer any early childhood endorsement.

MS. BESLER: At this point, no, we do not have an early childhood certificate program in this state.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: That's incredible, and I can't believe Rutgers doesn't even offer that, or any others.

MS. BESLER: And we keep hearing the push for certified teachers, but we don't have the mechanism in place at this point to produce certified teachers. Even if we were to get a course running or certificate program running in September, that's still four years from today that we'd be able to produce a certified teacher.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Thank you.

MS. BESLER: You're welcome.

SENATOR MARTIN: Rudy, that's primarily because there is no requirement to have early childhood certification. When you get your certification now, you can teach K through eight. What would really need to be done, at least in my view, is to have an early childhood mandatory certification. That has been discussed for a number of years in the state. Joe Palaia and others have promoted that legislation. It has not received legislative approval. I know that there are certain of the educational groups, namely the NJEA, who have resisted that. I think that is absolutely essential. If you don't have a requirement, it's difficult for the colleges to want to put out a program along those lines.

But now the Court and the State has agreed to mandate pre-K half day for three-year-olds and four-year-olds and in the *Abbott* districts move to the model of full day. I think the need is even greater. The point by this witness is well made that the kinds of instruction that you have to provide for a four-year-old is a lot different than what you have to provide a 14-year-old.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Thank you.

If I may, we have-- Every time I think I know the number of witnesses another sheet with 20 names is brought up to me. So what I would ask is if, in fact, comments have been made that you would be reiterating, if you could just echo that you agreed with earlier comments that were made in a particular point, I would appreciate it. Because it would impossible to get

everybody in to testify. And the testimony has been excellent so far because it has brought up varying points that I think are all of real value.

Cecilia Zalkin, Association for Children.

CECILIA ZALKIN: Thank you, Senator Gormley and members of the Committee. I am the Associate Director of The Association for Children of New Jersey, which is a statewide child advocacy organization located here in Newark on Hallsy Street. I appreciate having the opportunity to testify today, and I will very brief. Some of our comments have been reflected in earlier testimony, and my thought was really to identify some issues. I know this Committee is going to continue its discussion, and we'd like the opportunity to provide information to the Committee at a later date.

As a child advocacy organization, ACNJ became involved in this issue about a year and a half ago. We saw both the early childhood program aid under the new school financing law, as well as the Court's decision in *Abbott*, as a really unique opportunity to enhance early childhood programs for children. I don't think you will have any debate on the importance of those programs and how successful they are not only in preparing children for school, but also for lifelong success.

We also saw this as an incredible opportunity for collaboration. Although the implementation of programs rests with the school districts for a variety of reasons, especially the practical reasons of staffing and facilities, this is not a job that districts can do alone. And we really saw this as a time to enhance and improve collaboration across the broader early childhood community, including Head Start and child care, which traditionally has provided services to this age-group of children, unlike many schools.

We also saw this as a time to look at a system that would be comprehensive as you have discussed this morning, that will also address the working needs of families. When you look at children in the *Abbott* districts, there are also children whose families have work requirements under Work First New Jersey or working families who depend on the State for subsidized child care. We felt this is a system that could be comprehensive and a high-quality system. We also saw it as an incredible opportunity to redress some of the underfunding and issues that have gone on in the child care community for a long time: the inability of the child care community to assist staff to professional development, to have pay scales that were equal. This was an opportunity not only to provide high-quality programs, but also to enhance and improve the broader network of child care as well.

Over the last year we have become part of a growing coalition that has representatives from the education community on the district level and on the State level, part of the child care community, the Head Start community, the higher education community looking at what some of the issues are that need to be addressed. We are at the point of pulling together our recommendations in a position paper, which I would like the opportunity to share with this Committee in the very near future. And I just would like to briefly highlight those issues that we feel need to be addressed as this moves forward if it's going to be done in a comprehensive, quality way.

You've heard already about the issue of teacher staff credentials, about the fact that we do not have an early childhood certification in New Jersey. These are certainly issues that must be examined not only for future

workers in this system, but for people who are currently employed, how do we improve their staff credentials as well.

Program design is critically important, especially including issues like class size. Collaboration is key. We've barely scratched the surface on the practical implementation issues, how is this going to work? But it has to involve the whole community. The community has to be together at the table in the planning and design of these programs as well.

Facilities is a critical issue. I understand that school facilities is moving on its own track. We are very concerned that early childhood programs be on the top of the list when facilities are considered. The reality of space issues: We did a survey last year of the original 128 districts receiving early childhood program aids, and about 60 percent had plans to build because they had no place to locate the early childhood programs. Facilities is a critically important issue not only within the school district, but in the supporting child care and Head Start programs as well.

Monitoring an evaluation over the long term. We'd like to see a system that builds some of that up front, so we know what outcomes we are expecting and have an idea of how to assess whether that is being achieved before too much time goes by and too much money is spent. And funding. Obviously, you are going to hear a lot about funding is a critical issue.

Again I really -- this morning just wanted to highlight some of the issues that I think are critical as you move forward on this. Again I'd like the opportunity for our coalition to share some of its recommendations with you at a time in the future. As you may also know, the Governor has established a Task Force on Early Childhood Education, which has begun to meet. It had

its first meeting last week and is also on a fast track to develop some information in these areas as well.

So I look forward to an opportunity to work with you in the future.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Thank you.

MS. ZALKIN: Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Next, representative of the New Jersey Policy Development Board, Gayle Kloepfer.

GAYLE KLOEPFER: Very good.

Good morning.

SENATOR GORMLEY: I was in the ball park.

MS. KLOEPFER: You did very fine.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Thank you.

MS. KLOEPFER: Good morning. I'm Gayle Kloepfer, and I'm Executive Director of SWN Corporation in Newark. I am going to hand in two separate sets of testimony this morning because all of our concerns have been addressed. But I want you to be aware I am Chairperson for the State of New Jersey's contracted child care centers. There are over 200 of them in the state.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Contracted by?

MS. KLOEPFER: The Department of Human Services, the Division of Family Development. And there are a number of us here today that have been providing child care services in your *Abbott* districts for over 110 years. And I am very happy to tell you that--

SENATOR GORMLEY: That was even before they were *Abbott* districts.

MS. KLOEPFER: That was even before they were *Abbott* districts, but it was certainly a point in time where women were returning to work and families had a need for child care. And that's why those agencies were established. And I want you to fully understand that it has always been an educational process as well, not just an early care process.

The testimony that I am handing in this morning comes from the State of New Jersey's Child Care Advisory Council and from the State of New Jersey's Policy Development Board. We have had opportunities to meet with the Department of Ed, and I thank you for the opportunity this morning.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Can I ask you a question?

MS. KLOEPFER: Yes.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Which testimony do I get?

MS. KLOEPFER: Both of them. The Child Care Advisory Council and the Policy Development Board.

SENATOR MARTIN: We got a special set.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Yes, there is a special set.

Thank you very much.

MS. KLOEPFER: Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Steve Block, Education Law Center.

Dave would be here, but he is filing a motion right now. (laughter)

That was a joke. Senator Martin said it might not be a joke. Is he filing today? This is--

STEVEN BLOCK: It shows you the diversity of our staff.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Yes.

MR. BLOCK: I am Steve Block. I am the Director of School Reform Initiatives for the Education Law Center. As you know, for the last 25 years we have represented the educational rights of all of the children in the *Abbott* districts before the State Supreme Court. And I can tell you that I personally have been involved in *Abbott* for the past 20 years and helped Marilyn Moorehouser craft the original complaint that led to the historic and unprecedented remedies that the Court gave us in 1997 and 1998.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. Things are not going well in the schools and districts covered by the *Abbott* remedies. The Department of Education has embarked upon an implementation program that defies common sense and sound research and ignores children, educators, and the State Supreme Court.

SENATOR GORMLEY: I'm glad we have some building blocks to work on. (laughter)

MR. BLOCK: If, as we do, you are to listen to the voices of teachers, parents, and administrators throughout the 28 districts, you would hear a crishendo of dissatisfaction with the regulations, the guidelines, the time lines, the instructions, the standards, the nonresponsiveness, and the arrogance of the Department of Education. (applause)

It is our hope that your Committee will exercise oversight responsibilities and begin a thorough investigation of statewide implementation of the *Abbott* remedies. In pursuit of the goal, I offer the following testimony on the early education aspect of *Abbott*.

As you will recall, the Court required that full-day kindergarten and needed preschool programs be in place by next September. Program standards for the preschool component were in the main originally offered by the Commissioner during the late 1997 remand proceeding before Judge King. The Commissioner proposed a half-day program for four-year-olds. We objected and, as you know, the Court modified the plan to include three-year-olds. The Commissioner proposed a class size of 15 and facilities consistent with good public school standards. He proposed a DOE certified teacher and an assistant teacher for every class. He proposed a well-planned, high-quality program similar to the nationally recognized Perry Preschool or Abecedarian Programs and the New Jersey Good Starts. He proposed preschool linkages to whole school reform and to the core curriculum content standards. He proposed the provision of health, social, nutrition, and transportation services.

These were the quality standards offered by the Commissioner on behalf of the State. We supported this vision of preschool because it was based upon research, and it appeared responsive to the need children in the *Abbott* districts have for a serious boost in their readiness to tackle academic work in kindergarten. And the Court discussion of the anticipated preschool programs included each of these components.

Where the Commissioner and the Court parted company, however, was not on the standards, but rather on the need to assess actual students and on the sufficiency of available funding. You may recall that since 1990 the Court has required the State to determine the particular needs of

actual children to identify needed programs, their design, and their cost. The State has consistently failed to comply with this requirement.

In fact, early childhood program aid was ruled unconstitutional just two years ago because there was, and still is, no basis for determining its sufficiency. And the State failed once again to conduct assessment of real children when ordered to do so before Judge King. Faced with continued DOE resistance to this mandate, the Court has now bypassed the State and incorporated needs assessment as a regular part of local school and district planning and budgeting.

Needs assessment, not available funding, is now the constitutional measuring stick for deciding what programs children need and how much they will cost. That is why Justice Handler correctly predicted that eventually the *Abbott V* remedy will require more State funding when he spoke at Princeton just one week after *Abbott V* issued last May.

SENATOR GORMLEY: I wish he had that courage when he was in Burn's (phonetic spelling) cabinet.

MR. BLOCK: The DOE's response to the quality standards and the required focus on needs assessment has been to ignore the Court in pursuit of an apparent policy of funding limitations. The DOE failed to include preschool needs assessment in its regulations and guidelines, rejected district requests to include the minimum cost of the Rutgers study in district preschool budgets, apparently ordered the State-operated districts not to participate in the study, and has rejected many district plans that show how the needs of their children indicate more intensive programs of longer duration.

Despite the clear language in the Commissioner's Supplemental Program Study and direct testimony by Dr. Anderson before the remand court, the DOE has now retreated from education standards and imposed DHS child care standards on the local planning process. While there is virtual consensus on the importance of collaboration between school districts and local Head Start and child care centers, the imposition of DHS standards, if allowed, will establish a three-tier system of early education in *Abbott* communities.

Programs in public schools will operate on one set of standards, Head Start centers will have a second set of standards, and child care agencies will operate on yet a third. This proposed system will result in inequalities in staff, facilities, and programs and violates the very premise of equal education that underscores the entire 18-year history of *Abbott*.

Through this process what has become clear is that there are many Head Start and child care centers that do a fabulous job working with children and their parents. What is also clear is that all such programs have been underfunded for years. In order for there to be program comparability for local centers to provide the comprehensive education that children need and the Court requires, it is essential to provide the support and funding they need to improve their facilities, staff, and programs. Yet, there has been no guidance from the DOE on any of this. Indeed, many of the districts have been denied the opportunity to work with Head Start since the Head Start are presumed to be providing even more than what the DOE now requires and, therefore, according to DOE reasoning, need no additional funding to improve their programs.

Despite the fact that districts had only two months once school began to develop local collaborations, assess children and programs, and write plans and budgets, the DOE gave itself more than three months to finish the simple job of reading and reacting to the plans. DOE's delay in responding and its rejection of *Abbott* standards seriously threatens the September deadline. It now appears that as many as half of the districts or more will file appeals. These appeals will challenge the DOE's decision to impose noneducation standards, to ignore district needs assessment for more intensive extended day and year programs, to reject nutrition, health, and transportation services, to ignore adequate facilities, to ignore the needs of children with disabilities -- all for the apparent purpose of requiring districts to live within current funding levels.

We respectfully propose that this Subcommittee should immediately address the chaos, confusion, disillusion, frustration, and delay that has resulted from DOE implementation of early education planning under *Abbott*. We suggest further that this Subcommittee direct DOE officials to appear before you at a public hearing to fully explain the status and problems with implementation. We also suggest that your staff conduct a thorough background investigation to prepare you for this hearing.

We are available to assist your staff in this effort. In the final analysis, the DOE must be held publicly accountable for its actions.
(applause)

Thank you for your attention, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Senator Robertson. (applause)

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes, two questions.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Applauding the question, that was good.

(laughter)

SENATOR ROBERTSON: The first question has been suggested by those in the private sector that there be an opportunity for parents to have choice in terms of providers of service in this area. What is the position of your agency, or what is your personal opinion, if you can articulate the position of your group, on the question of choice providers?

MR. BLOCK: We don't have an official position. I think personally I support it. There has been very little guidance thus far on the question of placement and recruitment from the Department of Education. For example, the Department has suggested that only 75 percent of parents are likely to participate. There is no evidence of that. Other states which have widespread preschool programs have 85 percent and 90 percent participation rates in communities serving disadvantaged children.

So there needs to be more attention paid to both the question of placement, where children attend preschool, as well as recruitment of children.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: The other question is -- and this may be a difficult one to answer. What do you think our options are as a Legislature? One of the things that always struck me-- I'm a new member of the Senate. I was not involved in many of the discussions that took place over the last 18 years. The Legislature as a whole-- I would have filed an amicus brief on behalf of the Legislature, that was my opinion. But as a whole most of these discussions took place between the attorneys before the Supreme

Court, one representing the executive branch of government and the other one representing the students.

How broad is our ability to address this question as a Legislature? I mean, I've spoken to folks on your staff who said -- well, who gave me the impression, I should say, of saying, "Well, it really has to be done in a certain quality way or else we are going to sue and get our remedy in court." How much do we have available to us or is this just a forum for airing out?

MR. BLOCK: No, we think you have significant authority. We think one of the things that you should do, for example, is to require the Department, when it promulgates the new set of regulations for *Abbott* implementation, to go through a public review and comment process. Part of the problem is the Department is requiring, appropriately, collaboration to the local level. The Department collaborates with no one.

The Commissioner issued his regulations by executive fiat last July 17, and there was no input into those regulations, and it's part of the reason why, as I said, they are so poor. We believe in the collective wisdom. We think that all of us should be at the table talking about how to make this work.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: But what I really meant was discretion in terms of the remedies that we put forward, not just a matter of oversight or the Department of Education, but when it comes to issues of choice, when it comes to issues of facilities. When it comes to issues of that sort, how much discretion do we really have in your opinion as an attorney looking at the *Abbott* case?

MR. BLOCK: I'm not an attorney. I'm an educator.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh, I'm sorry.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I am the Director of School Reform Initiatives. I'm not involved in litigation.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Lawyers get involved in everything. That's one of our problems.

SENATOR GORMLEY: If I may.

MR. BLOCK: Yes.

SENATOR GORMLEY: That's what the hearing process is about. The real goal is without trying to react to a court order, without trying to react to a suit, and without trying to react to stonewalling, and we've had our problems with the Department and the Committee from time to time. If we can actually hold hearings like this and find out how we can collaborate without reacting to--

Listen, you've had an obligation and you fulfilled that obligation. I'm not trying to say anything but that you were doing your job and you did it well. However, what we would like to do in this Committee is try to avoid it by mallet to see if, in effect, we can bring all sides together and find out if we can have a process. Because I think as you look at every *Abbott* district every one is unique. In certain districts the churches offer great potential. I mean look at this facility, Head Start offers great potential in each area.

Listen, everyone knows the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of programs and a variety of issues. And what we are trying to do with the Commissioner is trying to get everybody together and to see how we can find common areas of agreement. Not whether-- And listen, you had to do it the way you've done it, I want to reiterate. This is not to say that any one side has handled the issue incorrectly because people are advocates and there is a

variety of ways to serve as an advocate. What we have to do is try to find a balance here. And I don't care if the court might issue an order tomorrow. I want to find the best program.

Because as busy as they are they have been cast in a role of making educational decision where they don't have your certification and they are making all of these decisions and none of them are certified. So what I'd like to try to do is do exactly what we are doing today. Find the best program in town, encourage the Commissioner to do that because I think it's hard to write a perfect set of regs because I think every *Abbott* community and every town in the state is divergent, and there has to be that level of diversity so you can deal with it.

I realize the need for regulations, but at the same time I think that you find, even among those who all have a common concern or are testifying today, that they differ among themselves how best to deliver those services. This is always going to be debated because it's children and they are young and it's the most vital time of their lives. If there was ever an agreement on this, I would be shocked just by the concern people should always have for children. There always has to be a dichotomy of opinion in this.

So, hopefully-- I'm not going to investigate them, but I am going to bring them in and I'm going to call Dave Hespe every day and I'm going to want to know what's going on every day. And we are going to say, "This was a good idea at the hearing. What do you think about this idea?" And you well know the first meeting I want to do -- we've talked about it -- is talk to David about David sitting with David, and that's the most important meeting that

your organization and Department of Education find common links. And I don't want to talk about who was there before or whatever.

The point is I think that potential exists -- it seems to exist in some of the initial conversations that have taken place.

MR. BLOCK: If I may, and in also answer to Senator Robertson, we think that the latitude of the Legislature is not to relitigate *Abbott*, that is to say not to restate standards that the Court has established. The real issue is implementation. And there are very serious issues in implementation--

SENATOR GORMLEY: No, you have to understand, I respectfully want to disagree with you. I don't mind if I disagree with what the Court said because none of them are certified in education, I think.

MR. BLOCK: Well--

SENATOR GORMLEY: No, you have to understand-- The point is, if we have ideas or suggestions that we think improve on it, I want to make them. I look at the people around us in this room. Suppose everybody in this room agreed to something. That's what you want to put forward. Isn't-- Our obligation is to recommend what we think is the best. That's what I want to do. Try to get as much of a consensus out of all the people who are testifying and all those people who are concerned and make that. I don't want to keep-- I know there is orders, I know people can go back to court, but can we just try for a few months to see where everybody agrees? That's where I would like to take--

MR. BLOCK: And I can say for the Education Law Center we are happy to participate in that process. The problem is we have been excluded. To the point that you establish a collaborative process we will be there.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Well, you have to understand-- The first day that the commissioner designate was named I talked with David Sciarra. I assume they are talking. If they are not talking, I will call them both today about why aren't they talking because they should be talking.

MR. BLOCK: It's not about two people talking. (applause) It's about a collaborative process where everybody comes together. The fact is we don't-- The child care, the higher education, the Head Start, the public school communities -- all of us have to be at the table.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Wait a second--

MR. BLOCK: I mean David Sciarra--

SENATOR GORMLEY: No, I've listened to a lot of applause lines. Okay, a lot of great applause lines. When I talk about two people coming together, I am not talking about them socializing. Obviously what I am talking about is the head of your organization and the Commissioner having those substantive conversations. So don't try to say what I am referring is they are just chitchatting. Of course I meant they were talking about collaboration and all those other issues.

MR. BLOCK: The problem is that the Director of the Education Law Center and the former commissioner had several substantive sit downs. My point is that that process itself is not sufficient. It did not produce the results that we at least have been advocating, that we think would be more responsive.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Well, if you're talking about being excluded, obviously if you point to who you would -- the head of an organization would have to be most responsible for excluding would be the

head of the Department of Education, I assume. I mean you have expressed the fact that you have not been included in the process, and I don't want to see you -- I don't want to see anybody excluded in the process.

MR. BLOCK: Sir, I'm saying no one has been included, that's the problem, that's the problem. It's been a unilateral process.

SENATOR GORMLEY: And I'm agreeing with you that the process has to be directly with the Department of Education. I don't think we are saying anything that's different.

When I said two people talk, I didn't mean as idle conversation. I meant as the Department talking to people, talking to people who are concerned, getting that input, and reflecting that in their regulations and trying to come up with what is reflective of what is in the best interest of the children.

SENATOR MARTIN: Let me try this.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Go ahead.

SENATOR MARTIN: Mr. Block knows that as Chairman of the Senate Education Committee and Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, we have had some conversations, and we have shared some agreements and some disagreements. I can say, at least from my experience, that he is essentially right on the mark with the Department of Education. I know there is a representative here, and it may not be what Dr. Anderson wants to hear, but I think that the Department has not created a process in which the voices that need to be heard have been able to participate. And I say that because I am one of them. (laughter)

So I know that from experience and I know that-- I'm not saying the Department has to adopt every proposal. I don't think there is going to be

a consensus. In fact, I know there will not be a consensus, and I know there are some issues that we look at that you folks can't always. We do have other priorities, other issues from a legislative point of view like health, like transportation, like many other issues, and we have to balance limited resources.

You're advocates essentially for education, which is what you should be, but we also have to put those into perspective at some times and make some hard choices just like families do and private business people do, and so forth. On the other hand, there is certain minimal requirements and something where we want to go beyond that, especially when we are talking about education.

We have already invested an enormous stake in kids' education in New Jersey. We are on the verge right now of going forward in trying to change fundamentally the way education is produced, especially in the *Abbott* districts, which have been underserved by this state, at least in my opinion, since time and memoria.

We are also on the verge of something else. We do have a new commissioner. I assume will be-- Senator Gormley also chairs the Judiciary Committee, and Mr. Hespe will be going before his Committee for confirmation tomorrow, and I suspect he will be confirmed. And one of the things that I will bring -- because Senator Robertson and I both happen to also sit on that committee as members-- We will try to encourage Mr. Hespe, as I know I have already, to try to have a different style of a process.

Unfortunately -- and I think Senator Gormley and Mr. Block and Senator Robertson also were eluding to this -- it is very difficult as legislators

to act as administrators. We can see things like you can see things that may not be working appropriately, and we ask ourselves, what can we do? Like you, we can talk to the Department, we can encourage the Department. In some cases there are things that no department in the history of the world could probably make it perfect, at least in my view.

I have not yet seen a model across the country where there has been an effective school reform program in very troubled districts. There is pieces of it, and maybe New Jersey will be on the (indiscernible) of being the first to do it from a systemwide basis. But it is not like there is an easy cure that we are just ignoring or refusing to implement. It's going to be difficult, and it is going to require an awful lot of push and shove. But at the very least we are going to need to have a collaborative process, and hopefully that will be part of the new department, or we are going to continue to have this constant battle which is, up to now, has been very frustrating for all parties including the Department. So maybe there is some promise, and we will try to tweak that for you, Mr. Block.

MR. BLOCK: If I can just-- One last comment and--

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, just very quickly.

Let me concur with my colleagues. I've always tried to bring integrity to the process in Trenton. And I was taking my lumps for that even back in my district, but what is right is right. But we can't service anyone or serve anyone unless we communicate. It is clear that the Constitution says that the legislators does one function and the other side, the administration, is another function, but interpreted or implied in there someplace that we are supposed to work together with the best of the people we serve in New Jersey.

That has not been the interest of education. I had a good relationship with Leo Klagholtz but not the kind of relationship that would have him or his people call me as an *Abbott* district representative to say, "Look, here is what we are thinking about." Where other people are saying, "What's your thoughts?" It doesn't mean I get what I want. It means there is input and I hope that--

And I told David the same thing. I said, "David, you are coming into my district on the 19th, and I know you were invited, but I respect could you at least tell me." Well, someone is telling me, I understand that. I will call the someone else in my district if I want to participate and ask if I can be invited. But I said, "But that can not happen because the someone can tell you what they want, and it will never get to first base without my vote and without my signature, particularly if I get my colleagues to support me." I was sent to Trenton to have input where the massive people in the district can not speak or vote.

And so hopefully -- and Senator Robertson and I had this conversation before. Even when the Subcommittee started, we started a process to listen to folk who were consultants and other folk that we listened to later. But we wanted to come here first and hear from the people, and we wanted to know what's the relationship going to be with the Department of Education and the administration as related to those of us who are legislators.

Had some of the folk listen to Senator Martin earlier, it don't mean that we are totally right, then the education fund wouldn't have been as screwed up as it was. I just don't know what I can use. Thank god for the

leadership in others we were able to turn some of that around, but there was no collaboration effort.

And I think Senator Gormley has made it very clear that the reason he wants to come to the community-- Because one thing about the legislators, even though it may be a time-consuming process, where we don't get collaboration from the administration and where they legally set rules and policies from an administration perspective, we can change that through legislation. We just don't want to take that long, tedious route because *Abbott* and *Burke* have been sitting out there too long. We've got to come to grip with the Supreme Court decision, and we know as legislators whatever decision we make and our collected bipartisan wisdom in both houses are going to be criticized regardless because there is never enough.

But our job under the direction and mandate of our Chairman of the Joint Committee and our Subcommittee Chairman is to come back with as much people information and organization information to see what models should look like for early childhood education. And their Committee is doing the same thing for the construction, the same thing for the other components. That's the best we can do. But I'm not taking a back seat, and I've said this before in my own judiciary and I hope some folk remind him because I want to be in Trenton tomorrow and I know (indiscernible) education before, but I am not taking a back seat as the Senator from the 28th Legislative District that is representing Newark, an *Abbott* district, also representing the urban district of Irvington, but also have Maplewood and South Orange, that are not *Abbott* districts. *I* and *J* districts get hurt where there is not going to be a direct communication in some respect as to what happens.

Now if you take that across the board and have that same relationship with 28 district legislators, okay, you got a pretty good significant number there that can feed you information on what you are hearing and what the input has been at community meetings and people's concerns. They give you critical database that you can evaluate and then when you take that further and talk to the committee members and other people. But if you are not going to respect our position, then we will be out here. And you know what, we want-- We had problems before we address *Abbott* because it means that we are going to have to address the administration.

So David indicated to me that there will be dialogue. I hope it's not frivolous because, you know, once they get a point approved, they do what they want to do. But hopefully the Committee will make sure that they understand, you make it confirmed, but if you are not communicating with education committee people because you can't get to 120 sometimes, in particular *Abbott* district people doing this process, then as a Committee and Senators we are going to also have some very serious problem with you. The leverage is when you come and need something. You want to get everyone to entertain you. If you can't respect us, we don't respect you. That's the politics of it, but we have got to get through early child education. It's a very important component that needs collaboration, and I think we are going to insist on that because you got the right people here.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Chairman.

First of all, let me just say that this is great that we are having this forum here today because these types -- the types of issues that you brought

up, Steve -- the issues of implementation of early childhood program-- They have been out and people have been talking about them. It's not like this is something very new just coming to us for the first time, and I think that is why we are here today.

But the-- And I agree with my colleague, Senator Rice in the 28th, but I think that perhaps maybe, if the Legislature does become more involved, and particularly this Subcommittee, does become more vigilant in hearing the types of issues that we have been listening to that you put forth, and many people in and outside of my district have put to me in terms of implementation of early childhood, that we will see more cooperation from the Department.

Let's face it, a lot of us as legislators, Senator Gormley, Senator Rice, have been here for more than one administration and will probably be here when this administration goes. So we have a continuing interest in the implementation of a decision that could make New Jersey a model state in terms of early childhood education. We say, "Well, we have to be mindful of the dollars." Sure, you always have to be mindful of the dollars, but I think that we should look at what the needs are first and meet those needs. Because, be honest, the dollars are there, and what we will save by putting the dollars in early childhood education in the front end, we will more than compensate for on the back end and less Correction spending, less Human Services spending, less welfare spending, less human liability and human loss. So I appreciate your testimony, Steve, and I appreciate the Chairman for bringing this hearing here so that we can hear this type of testimony so that we can address the implementation problems with that.

Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Thank you.

The next witness is Trish Yamba, Newark Day Center.

TRISH MORRIS YAMBA: Good morning, or I guess I should say good afternoon. (laughter) My name is Trish Morris Yamba. I am the Executive Director of the Newark Day Center, an agency that was founded in 1803, which provides preschool services for 180 children, offers senior services, parent intervention, employment and training, and we administer the Fresh Air Fund.

I'm here today wearing three hats, because I always wear a hat for those that know me. (laughter) However, I am here representing my agency, Newark Day Center, the Newark Office of Children, and the Emergency Committee to Save Child Care, which is a consortium of community-based child care centers located in Newark.

I've been sitting here listening to the testimony and I will be brief. Back in November of '98, the Emergency Committee to Save Child Care submitted their position paper to Dr. Hall and Commissioner Klagholtz, and we stressed some of the things that have been mentioned today. We wanted an extended full day, full year of service. We asked that we have active parent involvement because that is what is happening in our centers today. We wanted to reinstate State certification for early childhood education, folks are talking about quality. You couldn't get certification right now if you wanted to because there is no one in the State who is offering this kind of licensure.

We want resources for families and children because, when you are talking about children, you are talking about families, and there are a lot of problems inherent in the families that come about through their children's

enrollment in our child care centers. We ask for training -- that training be included for the child care staff. The training that is currently implemented in a school district that it be extended to the child care community.

We thought that-- And the lack of communication -- I mean, there is always some type of a communication gap. However, we have not really had that problem. We had been communicating with officials from the Newark public schools for a long time. We may have our differences and we have not resolved everything, but we have talked. And some of the things that they talked about today we are seeing -- they will come to pass. However, there is certain things that I think is critical as we leave here today.

One, we don't want to lose the monies that we currently have that are currently funding our centers at \$5600. Folks relate to it as double-dipping, that if we receive money from the *Abbott* that we will lose the \$5600. It is not double-dipping. So we want to be sure that we maintain that current funding because it is important for the future of these centers.

The second thing that I want to talk about is this word quality. We have been hearing quality child care centers banded about for months. Gayle Kloepfer, who was here, mentioned that her agency has been in existence for 110 years. Newark Day Center has been in existence for 196 years. And North End Nursery and family full neighborhood house -- these centers and others have been offering quality programs, so we don't want to get mixed up with quality because of the *Abbott* decision and a lack of quality. They have always offered educational-based programs. They have-- I should say we have certified teachers. We may not have the certification that is being required now, but they are certified.

We are talking about CDA, child development associate. Talk about group teacher because group teacher certification is what was mandated prior to the implementation of the CDA. The CDA is the new kid on the block, but whether you have a group teacher certification to be a classroom teacher or a CDA, which has been mandated now, it's comparable. So there have been the certification in the classroom with the teachers. There have been professional staff.

And as we move along it seems as though -- and when you hear it -- For those that don't know and have not been intimately involved with educating children it appeared to the general public that those centers in existence today, including Head Start, community base, whatever you want to say, they don't know what we've been doing all these years. It seems as though we have been warehousing children without any educational component, without any professional staff, without any educational curriculum, which is definitely age appropriate. So I just want to say for the record that is not correct. (applause)

I also want to just give you a little history of how you name things because we are in 1999, but years ago when Newark Day Center was formed, which is formally the Newark Female Charitable Society, or North End Nursery, it was a nursery school. It was appropriate for that time. It evolved to be called day care, it evolved to be called child care. It is now early childhood education. But we were all back then and now in the business of offering quality services for the parents and the children in our community. And I think it is very important to know that we are here, we want our services

to be enhanced. We could use these beautiful facilities. We would love to have them. Children deserve them, and we would love to have them.

We would love to have extra money so that we could purchase state-of-the-art equipment in our classroom -- all classrooms. Preschoolers should have computers in a classroom. We are just getting some of the computers in our offices, never mind computers for the children in a classroom. But that has nothing to do with the quality of the program. It will enhance the quality of the program, but quality is still there.

The last thing that I want to say is that we welcome this new legislation. We waited a long, long, long time for this day to come. We welcome the support -- we welcome the financial support. Although the proposed \$8000 is not near enough, but we welcome that, we say that it's a starting point. Well, that may be so, but it's not enough, so we won't consider \$8000 a starting point. Let's start at \$10,000 or \$11,000, and let that be the starting point. (laughter)

However, we don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water, so you build upon what you have. There is no distinction between child care. If the funding stream-- Head Start was initially set up to invest those parents who weren't working to give a very healthy base to the children. Child care as we know it addresses working parents. Now everybody is addressing all the children and all the families. So we are talking here. We have a Newark Office of Children that has been in existence since probably 1974. We are organized. We do welcome your support, but as someone mentioned, we are here, we are the experts. We know -- we work in the vineyards and we know.

So we would like, when these task forces are being formed, these committees, sometimes someone needs to ask someone who has been there, still there, to give their opinions. So we welcome this opportunity to present this testimony to you.

Thank you.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Excuse me, just one question. I have to be very careful asking questions here because Ms. Trish Yamba, she helped raise me, so I have to be careful. But I just want to know-- Now, there is no early childhood certification in the state right now, but the universities do offer degrees in early childhood education, isn't that correct?

MS. YAMBA: There are degrees. Essex County College offers a two-year degree -- Montclair State and Kean. Those are degrees in early childhood education, but there is no State certification that was offered when I graduated back in the early '70s, so you are talking about obtaining a certification that is no longer available. But there are college-based programs that offer degrees. Yes, we want to focus on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Okay, so there are potential pools of people available who have a degree in early childhood education.

MS. YAMBA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: And probably some of them work with you, as a matter of fact.

MS. YAMBA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: And that is available, too. And I think we would want to make something like those types of curriculums and those types of programs available to people who are in day cares like yours.

MS. YAMBA: That would be very good. There are degreed people currently working in child care centers, sometimes we don't know why because the money certainly is not great. There are practically little or no benefits. About six or seven years ago most child care centers had many teachers with BA degrees. However, when the Newark Public School and other public school districts offered kindergarten, our teachers left because why should they stay with us for \$15,000, no benefits, when they can move into a system with benefits, retirement, and double the salary. So we still do have people there with BA degrees and master degrees contrary to popular belief and CDAs and group teachers.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you very much.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Thank you. (applause)

Veronica Ray.

VERONICA E. RAY: We are collaborating.

SENATOR GORMLEY: We have a collaboration here. Here is an example of what we have been talking about. We have a collaboration.

If I may, it is going to be physically impossible to get all of the witnesses. And I certainly appreciate the interest. We are going to run to about 12:30, but here is what we are going to do. Our staff people will be here. We'd appreciate your phone number. I will personally call everyone myself who wasn't given the opportunity. I think we've had a great overview. I'm going to try to get through as many people as possible, but I will personally call

you with a staff person, and we'll go over your concerns on an individual basis. I don't want anybody to have taken the time today and not feel as though there is not going to be a contact a from the Committee, and I will call you personally.

Go ahead.

MS. RAY: Good morning.

SENATOR RICE: God morning.

MS. RAY: Senator Rice and members of the Joint Committee on Public Schools, we welcome this opportunity to address you this morning. And we are not going to take up much of your time either.

We have provided for you this morning a resolution that was adopted by the New Jersey Head Start Association on February 4, 1999. It addresses the basic elements that will be needed to implement quality early childhood standards in the *Abbott* districts. One of the things we wanted to stress was that in adopting this resolution we worked very cooperatively with the superintendents. The superintendents have the problem of being listened to by their own Department of Education in order to secure the services that are needs for our children.

We also wanted to stress in our resolution -- and it's only the first statement that I want to go over. And it says, in the *Abbott vs. Burke* case, the New Jersey Supreme Court rule that children living in *Abbott* communities have a constitutional right to early childhood education -- to prepare them to be education-ready for kindergarten. And that's key, the constitutional right. And because there is so much controversial inclusion as equal partners at the table with the Department of Education, with the Department of Human

Services, I am afraid, gentlemen, that you had become the keepers of the children and that you must protect their constitutional right.

And, if I do anything this morning, it is to beseech you not to fail our youngest population. Look around at what has been happening across our great state to our present children. They are children in elementary schools and our high schools and our middle schools, and ask yourselves can you see that happen to our little ones, to the youngest population. I'm afraid that this will fall to you and all the decisions that you make will impact on them for generations to come.

And at this point I'm going to turn this over to Audrey to give you some other information while I get your resolutions for you.

AUDREY FLETCHER: Thank you, Veronica.

My name is Audrey Fletcher, and I serve as the Chairperson of the Education and Information Committee for the New Jersey Head Start Association.

Throughout the State of New Jersey, Head Start serves over 9000 children who reside in the *Abbott* district, as Veronica just shared with you, the importance of each and every one of you. Now, I'm looking at four members of our State Legislature who are here listening -- listening to testimony as it pertains-- (audience interrupting)

Excuse me, please. Excuse me. We can sing together, we can't talk together, please. You know, I get very emotional about this issue as it pertains to our children. They are your children and they are my children.

If I had standing before you right now two children who reside in different parts of this state, one an *Abbott* district child one a non-*Abbott*

district child, could you make a distinction between those children? *Abbott* is all about parity.

It's about the needs of every one of our children. We will not stand for -- and I'm certain that you won't either -- stand for any, any attempt on the part of anyone to make such distinctions in our children. We don't have stepchildren in this state. I would bet that you agree with me on that. That's why we are here this morning.

It's not about Democratic verses Republican. It's not about Head Start verses child care. It's about what our children need across this state, and it's on our watch that we have this opportunity. As Trish Yamba said earlier, and many of my other colleagues earlier, we've waited for this day to come, and we will not -- we will not let this short window of opportunity close, not in the faces of our children. We will do everything that we can to make this happen.

The issue is real clear. The issue is about parity. The protocol that has been established by the Department of Education as it pertains to what is it that your district needs, what do we need to do to make sure that there is parity across the board for all of our children-- They start off with asking each one of the districts to look at their communities, to assess the needs of their communities. It makes sense to me.

As a result of assessing those needs, then you have to put in place and establish clear-cut standards that are consistent across the board. Parity, that's exactly what we are talking about. When we look at where individual programs are, where individual districts are, we are going to see that they are in different places. But when you have clearly developed consistent standards,

then you apply those resources that, yes, are dollar driven, but you apply those resources equally across this state so that those standards are, in fact, implemented. They are certainly monitored; that's what the Department of Education is in business to do. That's what we pay them to do. That is what you expect them to do when you allocate the dollars to them.

I have been in this business for over 30 years. I started off as a Head Start parent with a little four-year-old. I came from a welfare family, went into a Head Start program, availed myself of all of the resources -- comprehensive resources -- and that is what the law says needs to be in place because it makes sense. Comprehensive resources for our children to bring people from A to Z, not from A to somewhere in the middle and drop them because that is what has happened year after year after year, which has to be turned around. So when you look at parity, you've got to take into consideration all of the ingredients that ensure that this will happen.

I am also tired of the fact that this year -- or this administration we have one governor in place, and they call a program good start, next year or next administration we might have somebody else in and they change the name and change some of the rules. You know, we need to make sure-- And the question was raised earlier. What is it that you can do? What you must do is you have to make sure that we end up with clear-cut laws -- legislation -- that requires that the standards that we are going to work hard to put in place across the board -- the Department of Education, Human Services, Education Law Center, the Head Start community, the child care community, everybody coming together, and when we do our work we have to make sure that it stands in place, irregardless of who is in position. Somebody will--

You may move on to Federal level, Senator Gormley.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Not with my luck.

MS. FLETCHER: You may. (laughter) You may have those aspirations because you see--

SENATOR GORMLEY: I do, but it's just not going to happen. (laughter) You and I are going to be here for the next 30 years. I'm not leaving.

MS. FLETCHER: Senator Gormley, let me tell you this. We teach our children to raise to their greatest potential. I would never discourage you or anybody. And what I'm saying--

SENATOR GORMLEY: I got some people I want you to talk to. (laughter)

MS. FLETCHER: As you move on-- And many of you-- Because you see we've interacted with many Senators, many Assembly people, many governors, many commissioners of Education, Human Services, and the like, but there is a consistent community -- right, Trish? There a consistent community -- right, Becky? -- who have been here for 30-plus years, and we need to make sure that as you all move on to reach your greatest potential that we are left with some consistent standards and some laws that support the implementation of quality -- high-quality services for our children and our families across the board. That is what all this is about, and we can't forget that.

When we looked at part day, you ought not look at funding part day for the purposes that we are dealing with, in a general sense. Part day-- Because if we look at the needs and assessment of the needs of the families that

we are serving and somebody told them, “Guess what, you have got to get off of welfare and go to work,” now when you do that that means that you need full-day child care, correct? Part-day ready does not comply with the assessment of the needs of those children and those families.

So you need to take a real hard look at that. And when we talk about collaboration -- and you know that is a very nice word and a lot of people are throwing it around these days. We want to make sure that we are not spinning our wheels, assisting with the development of high-quality programs in our districts, which we need to do, consistent programs, seamless programs -- I heard that word mentioned. But when we look at putting those high-quality programs in place-- And we don't want anybody to stand on our backs to make sure that those resources come into a district and they collaborate with us to date, and then all of sudden five years down the road say, “You know what, we can do this better because they taught us how to do this.”

We want to make sure that we are talking about partnerships. There is a difference between collaboration and partnerships. We are talking about strong partnering agreements that will again last beyond the immediate hype of this changing arena. So again the requirements and the responsibility lies in your hands.

All the children, many of them you've never seen, and probably will never see, depend on you -- each and every one of you. So the next time you look in the mirror you make sure that you really clearly understand how awesome your responsibility is. We depend on you. We are here, we've always been here, to serve as real partners in the development and the

establishment for quality -- high-quality child care for all of our children. Parity is really the name of the game.

Thank you. (applause)

Questions?

SENATOR GORMLEY: Any questions?

SENATOR RICE: Just a quick one.

Audrey, make sure I have your new number.

MS. FLETCHER: Okay, Senator.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Marion Bolden.

MARION BOLDEN: Good afternoon, Senator Rice and Committee. I'm Marion Bolden. I'm the Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning for Newark Public Schools. I'm here representing Dr. Beverly Hall, the State-appointed Superintendent.

I was glad that I had an opportunity to speak after some of the day care providers from the Newark district spoke because I did not want to leave here without saying that there are -- at least in my opinion, there has been a collaboration between the Newark Public Schools and the day care providers. I think testament to that fact is that our early childhood plan was approved; although it was approved conditionally, it could not have happened if we had not had a partnership. And I use partnership, I prefer to say partnership, as opposed to collaboration, and that was mentioned earlier.

We, prior to the *Abbott* ruling, had subcontracted with day care providers in our district. We have right now over 32 classes -- 32 or 33 classes -- subcontracted to take care of providers. So we had a structure in place that made it fairly easy for us to pick up and benefit from using day care providers.

Let me go back and say -- just in terms of the *Abbott* regulations, and certainly they are daunting in terms of what we are confronted with-- But of the three components, the early childhood program plan is going to have the most direct impact on student success. There is no question in my mind about that. Did we have concerns? Yes, we had a lot of concerns. And I had-- Dr. Anderson is not here.

Early on in the discussion with the State Department our concern was that the three- and four-year-olds were only going to get half day. The concern that we had, are they going to get a quality educational experience? The other concern that we had is that we as a district had been using early childhood program aid for other programs. And if now that money is dedicated to early childhood, how are we going to close the gap so that our other programs in the district are not impacted negatively?

And then the issue of certification, and you said don't be redundant, but I think of all of the pieces that were put on the table today we have made a lot of strides in talking to the Department of Education to get them to understand that full day is necessary -- certification is necessary, but yet we still need to have higher education. Understand that a certification in early childhood is necessary.

I just want to give you an example. I'm a mathematics teacher by trade. I became the director of mathematics, and then I became the Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. It did not put me in a position to know what early childhood was all about. So I took it upon myself, as my job necessitated, to visit early childhood programs with people that knew what early childhood programs were about. I ventured into a class, and I saw a

teacher that was teaching grammar mechanics to kindergarten youngsters. Now, I can't say that I should blame that teacher. That teacher the prior year taught eighth grade, but because of the lack of understanding of what early childhood programs are all about created that scenario in that school. That's something that can happen.

Putting together an early childhood program it has to make sense. And I still applaud the day care providers in our district because we have collaborated and we have talked about what needs to be done. Our early childhood plan-- I think part of what you want to know is what you can do to assist us. We certainly have a problem when it comes to making decisions in terms of finances. Hopefully we will be held harmless when it comes to diverting the money that was early childhood so that it can still support other programs.

Other than that I do think that--

SENATOR GORMLEY: Are you talking about flexibility?

MS. BOLDEN: No, I'm not talking about flexibility.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Or more?

MS. BOLDEN: No, I guess I'm talking about -- and it may not become an issue. But I'm saying anything that might be pending I said I just wanted to put on the table today-- We spent early childhood money last year for other programs other than early childhood because we were allowed to do that. And you have to understand that if you are a struggling district in terms of finances, you have to prioritize. So some money was spent for early childhood and some was spent in high school. And what I am saying is that now the regulations say that all early childhood program aid must be spent --

and we are talking about a sizable amount of money, \$20 million or so. What happens is it impacts negatively on other programs; that's one issue.

But if I go back now to the issue of early childhood, I want to say that we sent out RFQs in order to get qualifications of the day care providers. We got back over 59 respondents. We are hopeful that that will be enough to service between 8000 and 10,000 youngsters who fall in the age of three and four-year-olds. What we had done beyond that is that we have the capacity in our district if we need to add or extend, we can't do that yet until we use all of the day care providers. And we have done also as a contingency we will outsource beyond that if it becomes necessary to make sure that the three- and four-years-olds get a quality program.

I think that I pretty much wanted to underscore the fact that I think that providing service in a day care center was absolutely something that we agree with. There is no fight in our district in terms of who should provide service. We welcome the community to be supportive of us.

We have a community development office that Becky Doggets (phonetic spelling) is in charge of. I have an early childhood and we also have day care providers collaborative. And it is through the efforts of the group collectively that we have even been able to do and accomplish as much as we have.

Yes, we do have concerns, and we do want to include as many people as we can because that is what this is all about. And beyond that I think that if you deal with the certification piece or help us mandate that, it goes a long way in ensuring that quality instruction is going to be provided for the youngsters in our district.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Questions from members of the Committee?

SENATOR RICE: I have a question, Mr. Chairman.

Could you make sure that the Committee, through the Chair, but particularly me-- Every concern the district has -- because we are transitioning superintendents, too. And it's going to be very interesting what transition and superintendents transition to commissioners. I want to make sure I have a strong voice. And on the points that Dr. Hall is concerned about prior to her leaving here. So I'd like to have that for the Committee, for myself, so we can analyze them.

Also, I want to just remind my colleagues out of all the special needs districts and takeover districts that issue raised in terms of not losing other programs at the expense of a mandate is very important. This is the district that \$30 million was taken out of when we had the financial needs, and the Governor appointed this Committee and insisted, under Jack Ewing, go back and take another look and put \$26 million back. But the issue that they raised to me -- they said, "Congratulations, you got \$26 million coming back because our finances look okay." So it was clear that it (indiscernible) the district because of the State finances. We can't have that trade off.

If we are going say that these are where the dollars are going for early childhood education, then, high schools where we have been having problems, and middle schools, and etc., they still have to function with substantial programs in a matter of our components under *Abbott*. Music, arts and things of that nature need to be put back in there.

So we need from you -- it's on tape, but I don't trust these recorders most of the time. I've been in this business a long time.

SENATOR GORMLEY: It's not one of those recorders.

SENATOR RICE: I mean in terms of getting all the information because I've seen my city clerk for 16 years and give me transcripts and things -- I just couldn't even make out the structure. Give us in writing what it is--

SENATOR GORMLEY: I'm a different Republican. I'm not Nixon. Now, come on let's--

MS. BOLDEN: I will make sure, Senator Rice, that you get that. Also, I should also say that Dr. Hall has discussed some of these issues with Dr. Hesper.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Any other--

SENATOR RICE: I wanted to make sure he listens.

MS. BOLDEN: Okay.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Thank you, Chairman.

Just a question about the response back on the request -- the district request -- for early childhood education approval. And-- Was there-- And there were no dollars -- from what I understand, they did not approve your financial requests. They, I guess-- Can you just give some detail about that?

MS. BOLDEN: Well, the approval was conditional, and it was based on not so much the dollar amount, but what we were attempting to do in terms of who could provide service.

What we had attempted to do in our RFQ was to have a rating system in terms of certification and the readiness of a day care center at that time to provide service. And if we used-- For example, if we rated the 57 and went down to 42, if we thought that the school district could provide a more quality program, we wanted the option of using our own site, and we weren't allowed to do that. We were told in the resubmission that we have to use the day care providers that are licensed first. So that is something that we went back and adjusted.

And then the other issue I think that we had a transportation fee that we needed to clearly delineate how we are going to use it. So those were the issues that needed to be responded to.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Yes, and I think, Mr. Chairman, that's a key point. Districts were not able or not allowed to be able to establish whether they thought a particular child care facility could meet the requirements better than the district could and weren't given the option of providing those services themselves. The Commissioner rejected--

Can you repeat that?

SENATOR GORMLEY: Yes, that's important.

ASSEMBLYMAN STANLEY: Can you repeat that, please?

MS. BOLDEN: One of-- We had several pieces that we had to respond to, but the one I guess you are asking me to describe is we, in our plan, said that we would use day care providers based on the results of our RFQ. And if we got to a point where we felt that the day care provider could not provide the same level of service that we could as a district, we wanted to have the option of having another pre-K class opened up within our district.

Because we do have sites that want to have pre-K, but we were precluded from doing that because we had to use all of the licensed centers first.

Now, we did get some dispensation in terms of, if we went into a center and we truly felt that at this point in time it wasn't at the level that we felt it should be, then we would have some recourse to go back to the State department and put that on the table.

So after we have used all of the quality day care centers, and perhaps we will be able to accommodate all of our youngsters that way, the next option for us was to use our own district centers. And even beyond that we had a contingency plan to outsource with a-- There are some innovative programs that develop modulars and take on the whole piece themselves. So we had all kinds of contingency plans in place, but-- That's one of the pieces that we had to go back and respond to and change.

SENATOR GORMLEY: What is the estimate of the school construction backlog for Newark?

MS. BOLDEN: Are you saying--

SENATOR GORMLEY: In terms of hundreds of millions. In terms of what is--

MS. BOLDEN: If you are talking about the District Facility Plan or early childhood?

SENATOR GORMLEY: District Facility Plan, what is the construction costs?

MS. BOLDEN: I can't tell you that offhand. It's in the excess of \$130 million. And you know at the time we were discussing the facility plan we weren't sure as to whether the day care--

SENATOR GORMLEY: Is that-- Your facility--

MS. BOLDEN: That's separate.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Is it exclusive of the preschool needs?

MS. BOLDEN: Yes.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Okay, fine.

MS. BOLDEN: And that was only made clear to us within the last few weeks.

SENATOR GORMLEY: Okay, that's important.

Any other questions? (no response)

Okay, what I'd like to do -- first of all, I'd like to thank everyone for attending. Myself and staff will be up here, and we would like to get the phone numbers of those names of individuals who signed up to testify -- and even if you haven't, if you would like us to call and go over the issues with you, we'd like to do that.

I appreciate the quality of the testimony, and the sincerity of the testimony was evident. And thank you all for attending today.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)