



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Division of Economic Support / Office of Child Care
57 Howard Ave. / Fl 3
Cranston, RI 02920
(401) 462-6877 / Fax: (401) 462-6878

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, R.I. 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island Kids Count
One Union Station
Providence, R.I. 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant,

It is a pleasure to express my strong support for Rhode Island application for the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. As director of the Head Start Collaboration Office at the Rhode Island Department of Human Services we have worked closely with the Department of Education in the development of this initiative. The Early Learning Challenge is a tremendous opportunity to create and implement a fully realized system for early care and education in our State.

Rhode Island has been on a path toward a quality framework for pre-school children, especially low-income children for over a decade. The QRIS system, Early Learning Standards, State investments in Head Start and Pre-K, and the growth of a host of programs for birth to three: bold professional development plans and a coordinated training and technical assistance system have helped us begin to realize the high quality system of care we are seeking.

As a partner at both a State agency (DHS) and also a the primary person responsible for Collaboration (ACF) we pledge to continue to support Race to the Top Rhode Island by linking Head Start grantees with this initiative, and by linking Head Start experience and resources with the Early Learning Challenge Team. This will be accomplished by membership in all the key activities outlined, such as Bright Stars, reviewing standards, professional development plans, and participation in a shared early learning Data system.

The Collaboration Office has been at the table from the beginning. A key partner is the Office of Child Care, which is co-located at the Department of Human Services with the Collaboration Office. Together we have oversight over thousands of Head Start and High- Need children in child care. The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge represents the most exciting opportunity we can imagine for a greater vision and reality for our children and families.

Sincerely
Lawrence G. Pucciarelli

Head Start Collaboration Director



SEIUHealthcare®
United for Quality Care

New England Health Care Employees Union
294 West Exchange Street
Providence, RI 02903
401.457.5099
Fax 401.457.1150
providence@seiu1199ne.org
www.seiu1199ne.org

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist, Commissioner
RI Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
255 Westminster St.
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke-Bryant, Director
RI Kids Count
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Burke-Bryant,

On behalf of the hundreds of family child care providers who are organized in our union and who provide child care and early learning opportunities each day to thousands of Rhode Island children, I am writing to express our support for Rhode Island's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.

SEIU is grateful for the investment in quality that the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant represents. We support the goals of constructing a "coordinated system of early learning to ensure that many more children from low-income and disadvantaged families, from birth to age 5, have access to dramatically improved early learning and development programs and are able to start kindergarten with a strong foundation for future learning." And most importantly, we believe that Rhode Island's plan outlines a set of ambitious and yet achievable goals to do just that.

We look forward to working with the state and with other agencies and partners to use these grant funds to strengthen our system of early learning and provide more supportive and more accessible professional development opportunities for all child care providers, regardless of what language they speak, while also ensuring that low-income working families can actually access and afford the child care options that exist. We are committed to continuing our advocacy and organizing to ensure that more children from low-income working families have access to high quality child care and early learning opportunities, and so that our state can better support and stabilize the child care workforce, and family child care providers in particular.

Beginning with the Starting Right program in the 1990s, Rhode Island has demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring that low-income children had access to quality child care and early learning opportunities before they entered school. Though the economic crisis and budgetary constraints of recent years have undone some of our earlier progress, it is our firm belief that given the new leadership in our state, we are poised to establish an integrated system of supports and incentives that improve both the quality of and access to child care and early learning opportunities for Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children.

We appreciate the work of Rhode Island's Early Learning Council to invite public comment and feedback from stakeholders in the shaping of Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant application. Given our state's history of partnership between administering state agencies and child care providers, advocates, and agencies, we are confident that the voices of all stakeholders will continue to be part of the conversation going forward.

On behalf of the home-based care providers in our organization who were called to make a difference in children's lives, as well as on behalf of our thousands of members who work in nursing homes, community health centers, and hospitals throughout the state who rely on the child care system for their young children's earliest learning experiences, we sincerely hope that Rhode Island's grant application is approved, and we look forward to continued participation in the dialogue to shape the future of that system.

Sincerely,



Chas Walker
Elected Organizer



BEAUTIFUL BEGINNINGS
CHILD CARE CENTER

401-785-8485

401-785-8487(fax)

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

255 Westminster Street

Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

One Union Station

Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

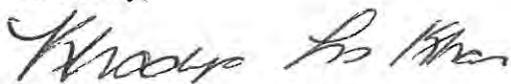
I submit this letter to express my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. As the director of Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center, a member of Rhode Island's Early Learning Council and a member of the BrightStars Advisory Committee, I am excited to support this initiative which will help improve the quality and accessibility of early learning programs across the state. With Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds Rhode Island will have the capital and technical support necessary to move rapidly, in a coordinated manner, to meet this critical goal.

At Beautiful Beginnings we and provide high quality care and education for over one hundred children from infancy through preschool in Providence, Rhode Island. We are BrightStars rated and operate one of Rhode Island's six State approved Pre-K classes. Birth to age five are critical years for children, a key time for developing important cognitive, language and socio-emotional skills that help lay the foundation for success in school. Our mission is to insure that all children that complete our program enter school academically and socially prepared to succeed.

Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds will bring more childcare centers into the quality rating and improvement system, thus increasing the quality of care that many children experience in the critical years before school. The funds will also assist Rhode Island in coordinating regulatory agencies and systems of care that affect our youngest citizens, allowing us to offer a more comprehensive system of care and education during these early years.

With the hard economic times that have hit Rhode Island, supports for children and families with high needs have waned and many children from fragile families are currently falling through the cracks. I offer my enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. Rhode Island's Early Learning Plan set forth in this application will substantially increase the school readiness of Rhode Island's young children and will advance student achievement in Rhode Island for many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Khadija Lewis Khan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Khadija Lewis Khan, M.Ed
Executive Director



October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminister Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

As the Executive Director of Connecting for Children and Families (CCF), I am writing to strongly endorse Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application.

As a community-based nonprofit organization located in one of RI's core urban districts, we provide a wide range of early childhood services to ethnically diverse, low-income families. We offer the nationally recognized school-readiness program *Parents As Teachers*, which provides child development education, literacy activities, and parenting support through home visits. Additionally, CCF provides quality childcare for 110 infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers and school age children. Our center recently received a four-star rating from *Bright Stars*, RI's Quality Rating and Improvement System.

We also offer the U.S. Department of Education's *Early Reading First Initiative*, designed to develop early childhood centers of excellence that focus on early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills that prepare low-income children for continued school success.



Early Learning Challenge Support Letter

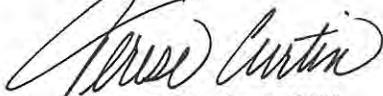
October 12, 2011

Page 2

CCF views the Early Learning Challenge as a tremendous opportunity for our state. It is critically important to invest in children early on so they will begin school ready to learn and stay on course throughout their entire educational experience. Through the Early Learning Challenge, CCF is committed to: expanding its services for low-income, ethnically diverse children in order to close the gap between our children and their more affluent peers; utilizing the new Early Learning Standards in our programs; and participating in the new, shared Early Learning Data System.

CCF has a long-term relationship with the Rhode Island Department of Education and RI KIDS COUNT as partners for high quality education. We support your leadership efforts to work closely with schools, families and community organizations to effect positive change in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terese Curtin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "C".

Terese Curtin, MSW

Executive Director

Deborah Gist, Commissioner
Rhode Island Department of Education
255 Westminster Street
Shepard Building
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant JD, Executive Director
Rhode Island Kids Count
One Union Station
Providence RI 02903

October 11, 2011

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant—Co-Chairs Rhode Island Early Learning Council,

I am writing this letter to express my support and the support of Phenomenal Readers- Woonsocket's Early Reading First Project for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. This federal grant program will provide enormous help in enabling the state of Rhode island to build more efficient and effective early learning systems for young children—infants, toddlers & preschoolers—and their families.

As the Director of Early Childhood Initiatives at Connecting for Children and Families, I am committed to fully supporting the tenets of this grant. I have personally been active in the early childhood community in Rhode Island for over 35 years. The work of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council has been outstanding throughout the process of preparing the application and it has been a privilege to serve with this group of professionals. The work of the council has brought together the early childhood community in a dynamic way that will continue to highlight the essential aspects of developing programs for high needs children and their families.

The Early Reading First Project, sponsored by Connecting for Children and Families, is designed to assist the development of early childhood centers of excellence that focus on all areas of development, especially on the early language, cognitive, and pre- reading skills that prepare children for continued school success and that primarily serve children from low-income families. As much as we support the literacy development of high needs students, with the awarding of the Race to the Top-

Early Learning Challenge Support Letter

October 11, 2011

Page 2

Early Learning Challenge grant, we will be able to carry on much of the work of our project:

- Closing the gap between our students and more affluent peers
- Reaching out to families in promoting high quality early literacy experience
- Improve teachers' knowledge, instruction and planning through professional development conducted by leaders in the field of reflective practice, early language and literacy development, children with special needs and ELL learners.

I wholeheartedly commend the effort of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council and believe that their commitment and resolve will continue to strengthen and expand the quality of programs serving young children throughout our state.

Sincerely,

Joyce C. Ruppell

Joyce C. Ruppell, Director
Early Childhood Initiatives
Connecting for Children and Families