



May 2009

Danbury Families Venture to Connecticut's Capitol to Voice Their Concerns About

More Than 50 Parents and Children Filled a Bus to Hartford as Part of Early Childhood Advocacy Day

“Don’t cut programs that help our kids!” That was the message Danbury parents sent to legislators on Wednesday, March 18, 2009. Fifty parents and children travelled to Hartford on a bus organized by Danbury Children First as part of a statewide Early Childhood Advocacy Day sponsored by the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance.

The message parents sent to legislators was clear: cuts to the state’s early childhood programs will have a direct effect on their children’s education and quality of life.

Parents and their children, donned in bright yellow “It’s All About The Children” T-shirts, were given the opportunity to meet directly with Danbury-area legislators, including State Senator Mike McLachlan and State Representatives Bob Godfrey and Janice Giegler, at the state Legislative Office Building.

Patricia Morocho, mother of Evelyn, age 3, talked to Rep. Bob Godfrey about the impact the Morris Street Family Resource Center has had on her life. “Since we began attending the playgroup, Evelyn has learned her numbers and her letters. We love going there. I know she will be able to succeed. This program is very important to my family.” Patricia benefitted from the Family Resource Center’s home visiting program, as well as the playgroup, and Evelyn will begin attending the School Readiness Program at Morris Street School soon. Both the Family Resource Center and the School Readiness program could be affected by budget cuts.

Lauren Halpin, mother of Alex, 6, and David, 3, explained how her oldest son benefitted from state-funded early intervention services and the developmental preschool at Danbury’s Mill

Ridge Primary School. Alex, who had speech and developmental delays is now in first grade and reading at the second-grade level. She explained that, “without these programs, Alex may have needed special education services” —services that are more expensive for Connecticut’s taxpayers in the long run.

Medarano Roman told State Representative Jan Giegler that he has four children—two of whom were born in this country and were able to attend the Head Start program. “I can see the difference in my children who went to Head Start,” he said, explaining that those children learned letters, numbers, and colors and were able to learn more quickly at school.

Upon arrival at the Capitol Building, the Danbury parents attended a session to learn about the current status of early child-



Danbury kids have fun traveling with their parents to the Capitol Building for Early Childhood Advocacy Day

The purpose of Danbury Children First is to *involve, empower and support* parents to improve the lives of children at home, in school and in the community



Danbury parents discuss the importance of programs that benefit young children with State Representative Bob Godfrey

hood programs in the Governor's budget during this exceptionally difficult budget year. Early childhood programs such as Head Start, School Readiness, Care4Kids, and Family Resource Centers rely on consistent state funding to provide quality education and childcare experiences for Connecticut's youngest

citizens. The session was part of the Early Childhood Advocacy Day sponsored by Connecticut's Early Childhood Alliance and Connecticut Parent Power, which was attended by almost 400 parents, children, and childcare providers from 16 communities across the state.

Parents in Danbury have also signed petitions and written letters urging lawmakers not to cut Danbury's School Readiness programs and Quality Enhancement Funds. The School Readiness Program helps parents afford safe, quality childcare programs so that they can continue working to support their families. The Quality Enhancement programs, which are used to provide training and development opportunities to teachers and educational workshops for parents and providers, are given no funding in the Governor's proposed budget.

For more information about legislative issues that affect Danbury's children and the Early Childhood Advocacy Day, call Linda Kosko at Danbury Children First at 797-8088 or email Lindak@danburychildrenfirst.org.

Danbury Children First is a parent-led organization that works to involve, empower, and support parents to improve the lives of children at home, in school, and in the community. ■

