

Statement- NYS Education Reform Commission

I am Jacqueline Cady . I am here as an advocate for high quality early education, as a founding member, former chairperson , and a continuing member of the Rochester Early Childhood Initiative.

I come with two asks: they go together.

1) PreK is of critical importance. Everyone knows that a dollar invested in a high quality 4 year old experience will pay back \$7, and MAY pay back \$17 in avoidance of later governmental expenses. Funding must be increased for PreK, to allow more children to participate and to support high quality programming.

2)But what about BEFORE PreK? Children come to PreK from home, from Headstart, from family Child care, from center based child care. They've had every possible kind of experience before they are four, and we know most cognitive and socio emotional development occurs in the brain BEFORE the age of four. This Education Reform Commission cannot fail to make a policy statement about the years BEFORE PreK.

Let's look at the example of Rochester. We are a school district with 90% of children eligible for free or reduced lunch. Thus the vast majority of our families should be eligible for child care subsidies. Federal and NYS funding for subsidies have been static or slightly reduced for many years. In Monroe County, our headcount of subsidized child care has dropped 50% since 2000.

This community has worked hard to support the quality of care in center and family based care. We have used charitable funding to offer in home training and mentoring, financial support for accreditation of homes and centers., special intensive training for caregivers of infants and toddlers, training in the impact of trauma. The child care subsidy is the vehicle that allows at risk children to access this high quality care. But with headcount reduced 50%, we are obviously losing ground. More funding is needed for child care subsidies.

A local business leader has supported us for many years, funding children's advocacy, supporting accreditation of centers, giving the lead gift for a multi year mentoring program for in home providers. Humorously he has always said "This is like a Fram Oil Filter, Pay me now or pay me later". This is why you must recommend more funding for early care and education. That "Pay me Later" costs a lot more. In addition to increasing funding for PreK, improve outcomes and decrease the long range cost of PreK-12 education by calling on the Governor to support high quality child care.