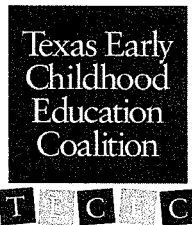


Testimony of:

Kara Johnson
Executive Director
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
(TECEC)



Before the:

Senate Education Committee

Senate Bill 49

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Good morning. My name is Kara Johnson and I am the Executive Director of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC). TECEC represents more than 275 organizations and thousands of members from across the great state of Texas. Our partners include representatives from public schools, Head Start, child care, the business community, higher education, foundations, community based organizations, and more. I would like to begin my remarks by thanking Chair Shapiro and the entire Senate Education Committee for hearing my testimony. I would also like to thank the Senate Education Committee for your efforts in building a high quality early childhood education system for the state of Texas.

The purpose of my remarks today is to support Senate Bill 49, which would ensure that the State Center for Early Childhood Development adheres to accountability standards that reflect its expanding responsibilities and role within the state. In 2003, Governor Rick Perry designated a State Center for Early Childhood Development and placed it at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. As a result of its state level projects, the State Center has become an entity with multiple reporting and accountability requirements. This has been a challenge for both the State Center and those trying to understand to whom the State Center is accountable.

The answer is that they are held accountable to multiple governing bodies. For example, because the State Center is a part of the UT System, it is first and foremost held accountable to the rules and regulations of a university. In addition, as a result of the federal grants received from prestigious institutions such as the

Department of Education, the National Institutes of Health, and the Department of Defense, the State Center is held to strict federal reporting standards. Additionally, because the State Center receives funds from both the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA), they are required to provide each entity with monthly reconciliations and an exact breakdown of expenditures. Finally, the State Center is also held accountable to the Texas Legislature through regular reporting on a bi-annual basis.

During the last legislative session SB50 was filed and it included the same accountability language covered in SB49. Because SB50 did not pass, the State Center has continued as an entity with a high level of state level responsibility, and multiple accountability standards.

TECEC and its members and partners are in support of House Bill 49, and it is my understanding that the State Center welcomes this transition and is ready to comply with any additional reporting or accountability.

On behalf of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.