

Connecticut Appropriations Committee RBA Pilot Project
Phase II

Agenda, Structure, and Questions for Appropriations
Committee Hearings

February 13, 2007

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Agenda, Structure, and Questions for Appropriations Committee Hearings with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Early Childhood Cabinet

I. Introduction

The full Appropriations Committee will hold two hearings between 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm on Tuesday, February 13, 2007, with the pilot agencies that are participating in Phase II of the RBA initiative. The first hearing, from 1:00-2:00 pm will provide DEP the opportunity to present an update on last year's pilot project regarding Long Island Sound water quality and a new project involving recreation and the state park system. The second hearing from 2:00-4:00 will provide an opportunity for the Early Childhood Cabinet to present its work on the population result "All Children Healthy and Ready for School Success by Age 5." Because of the limited time available, the two presentations will focus primarily on population and system accountability. With the exception of DEP, limited discussion of program accountability will occur on February 13.

Beginning on February 14, 2007, and ending on February 23, 2007, the five sub-committees of the Appropriations Committee that have jurisdiction over the pilot agencies – Conservation and Development, Human Services, Higher Education, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Health and Hospitals, – will hold regular budget hearings at which the state agencies that are participating in the RBA pilot project – DEP; DSS, DCF, and Children's Trust Fund; DHE; SDE; and DPH, DMR, and DMHAS – will have an opportunity to present RBA materials regarding their programs that are part of the pilot projects.

Because these hearings are designed to test the RBA methodology as it has been adapted for use in the Connecticut appropriations process, all Appropriations Committee members and pilot agencies are being provided the same materials. The objective is to have all participants fully prepared to explore the RBA process within the parameters of the pilot project without causing any participant to feel or seem to be unprepared or surprised. The Appropriations Committee hearings on February 13 and those portions of the regular sub-committee hearings that address pilot programs will follow the RBA methodology and will be limited to the areas of the budget addressed by the RBA templates submitted to the Committee. Funding requests and current expenditures are appropriate areas for discussion. Any issues that are not resolved at the formal hearings will be documented and may be pursued at the sub-committee working sessions with the pilot agencies and OFA.

II. Structure and Content of February 13 Hearings

Materials. Final versions of all RBA documents will be provided to Committee members and pilot agencies prior to the hearing. No additional materials will be

presented at the hearings. Limited PowerPoint presentations and other visual aids will be permitted if approved by Committee staff.

Order of presentation and questions. DEP will present its update of the two LIS templates and will respond to questions from the Committee before presenting the new population template for recreation. It will respond to questions from the Committee on the population template on recreation before presenting the program template on state parks. It will then respond to questions on the program template.

The Early Childhood Cabinet will present the population template before responding to questions from the Committee. It will then present the system template and four strategies to turn the curve before again responding to questions from the Committee. The Cabinet will not present individual program templates on February 13 and will only discuss individual programs in the context of the strategies or the Governor's budget proposal as it relates to those four strategies.

Presenters. The Commissioner of DEP will make the environment presentations. She may call upon program staff as appropriate. Commissioner Coleman and Janice Gruendel, co-chairs of the Cabinet, will present the population template for the early childhood presentation. Janice Gruendel will present the early childhood system template. The four early childhood strategies will be presented by Commissioners O'Meara, Starkowski, and Coleman and by Early Childhood Council co-chair David Nee.

Time for each segment. DEP will have one hour, followed by two hours for the Early Childhood Cabinet. The times for each segment are:

DEP

1:00-1:15	Presentation of updates to LIS population template and Clean Water Fund program template
1:15-1:25	Questions from Committee
1:25-1:35	Presentation of population template on recreation
1:35-1:40	Questions from Committee
1:40-1:50	Presentation of program template on state parks
1:50-2:00	Questions from Committee

Early Childhood Cabinet

2:00-2:15	Presentation of population template
2:15-2:30	Questions from Committee
2:30-3:20	Presentation of system template and strategies
3:20-4:00	Questions from Committee

The agencies will make a full presentation of the information from each document (population template, followed by system template and the strategies document for the Early Childhood Cabinet; population and program materials for DEP) before Committee

members ask questions on that document. Interruptions during the presentation of a document should only be made for the sake of clarifying what the presenter has said.

Appropriations Committee co-chairs will ensure that questions stay within the parameters of the RBA methodology and the pilot project. All issues within these parameters are appropriate for questions that expand upon the information presented by the agencies. Questions that can be used to probe more deeply into the substance of the presentations will be provided to the Committee members along with the final RBA materials before the date of the hearings.

Answers. Agencies are encouraged to say when they do not have the information requested and to indicate if the information is part of a development agenda. Agencies should defer discussion of issues unrelated to the pilot programs until the regular portion of their sub-committee hearing or for other communication outside of these presentations.

Follow-up. Committee staff and consultants will keep a list of all open questions from the February 13 hearings. At the conclusion of the hearing, committee and sub-committee co-chairs will decide which open questions should be followed up in the regular budget hearings that will occur from February 14-23 and in the sub-committee working sessions with OFA that will follow the hearings. The sub-committees and affected agencies will receive lists of open issues and additional questions based on the program templates prior to the budget hearings.

III. Suggested Areas for Questions and Further Discussion during Hearing: DEP

Below are questions that Committee members may wish to ask about each section of the DEP presentations. All questions must be held until the presentation of a document is complete.

A. Quality of Life (Population) Template: LIS

- **Presentation**

- Quality of life result
- Why is it important
- Funding
- Indicators
- Story behind the quality of life (population) indicators
- What would it take to succeed
- What are your strategies to improve performance in the next 3-5 years and why? (Include no-cost/low-cost actions)

- **Questions**

1. The percent of LIS waters that did not meet the standard for Marine Aquatic Use support increased from 39% to 47%. Even allowing for changes in methodology, does that really mean that 40% of LIS waters do not adequately support Marine Aquatic Use? Other than methodological changes, what accounts for the increase?
2. The hypoxia level for 2006 continues a trend that is elevated from several years preceding 2003. What factors are driving these continued elevated levels?
3. Is there anything we can actively do to avoid beach closings? The 2006 level is considerably higher than the preceding two years? What causes high bacteria levels? Is this related to nitrogen levels or is this completely different?
4. I still don't understand the eelgrass indicator. Isn't there some other indicator that would better capture habitat restoration?
5. Is there a way of creating a "critical species biomass index?" that may help us understand the extent to which the Sound is supporting certain species of interest, such a flounder and bluefish?
6. Other than improving water quality, what are we doing to increase fish biomass? How does this relate to oyster and lobster yields?
7. Are you also looking at the status of specific, sensitive species of fish as a living resources indicator?

B. Program Template: Clean Water Fund

- **Presentation**

- Program purpose
- Contribution to quality of life result
- Budget info
- Performance measures

- Story behind the baselines
- Partners and their roles
- What are your strategies to improve performance in the next 3-5 years and why? (Include no-cost/low-cost actions)

- **Questions**

1. It appears that the point source nitrogen load for CT is decreasing while that for NY is increasing. Why is that happening? Does this affect CT's ability to meet EPA targets? What can be done?
2. Hypoxia still appears to be a major problem. If we are so close to the reduction goal, why is hypoxia still such a problem? Should the target be considerably lower?
3. Does exchanging credits mean that while the overall nitrogen load goal may be met, certain areas of the sound will suffer?
4. Will the exchange of credits eventually slow down the improvement in LIS water quality?
5. What would be the first steps toward better management of storm water and non-point sources? Are there any no-cost/no-cost approaches that could be implemented?
6. Do you think providing grants is the right approach? It seems as if this may set up inappropriate expectations on the part of municipalities. Why don't we go with just short-term loans?
7. Nothing is listed in your research and information agenda. Are there emerging technologies that might allow for less costly approaches?

- **Open Questions for DEP from Last Year's Presentation**

Q1: What is DEP doing about education and outreach related to LI Sound quality and how much are you spending on these activities?

Q2: What no-cost or low-cost activities can DEP or the state undertake to improve water quality?

Q3: You testified that eelgrass beds are a good indicator of water quality. However, you have several other indicators of water quality. We are also interested in habitat restoration. Do you have any indicators for that other than eelgrass? If not, should you be exploring how you might develop other indicators?

Q4: What would it cost in one-time funding to eliminate the current backlog of water treatment plant projects?

Q5: We understand that you are seeking a consistent and sustainable level of funding starting with next year's budget. Regardless of the level of funding, can you recommend any changes in the way in which funds are allocated to the towns? For example, would it be more effective to use all of the available funds for low-interest loans rather than to continue a mix of grants and loans?

Q6: You testified that you thought that the negotiated target for TMDL was the appropriate target. Is there a current process in place to reexamine and possibly adjust the target if necessary?

Q7: Please explain the relative contribution of combined sewer overflows, agricultural run-off, and point source nitrogen load to the hypoxia problem.

C. Quality of Life (Population) Template: Outdoor Recreation

• Questions

1. Why isn't there an indicator that specifically addresses the acquisition of open space
2. How do you define "outdoor recreational places?" If areas like municipal playgrounds are included, doesn't this provide a false impression of density and scope of *natural* outdoor recreational places? Is there a way to define this more appropriately?
3. Given the large role of municipalities in providing outdoor recreational places, what mechanisms are in place to ensure coordination and joint planning?
4. It is understood that you currently do not have data on the extent to which outdoor recreational places are served by mass transit. Do you have a plan in place to acquire these data? What are some possible interim steps you could take to get a sense of gaps in mass transit for outdoor recreational places?
5. One of your proposed indicators on your data development agenda is the percent of youth having an outdoor recreational experience within the last year. Why are youth targeted separately?

D. Program Template: State Parks

• Questions

1. How did you develop your estimate of the number of individuals visiting state parks in the last year?
2. Are there ways of making the parks self-sustaining by charging admission? What about concessions? Other possible revenue generating approaches?
3. The percentage of CT residents using state parks in the last year is estimated to be 69%. How does this compare with other states? Do we know anything about those who do not use the parks, and why they do not use them? What has been done to try to attract new users?
4. How does the customer assessment of the physical condition of the parks compare with other states? While the overall assessment is pretty good, what aspects of maintenance are not satisfactory? Why?
5. Other than park users' assessment of the physical condition of the parks, you currently do not have customer satisfaction data. What would it take to get at least an annual estimate of customer satisfaction? Is there a way to get reliable interim estimates?

IV. Suggested Areas for Questions and Further Discussion during Hearing: Early Childhood Cabinet

Below are questions that Committee members may wish to ask about each section of the Cabinet presentation. All questions must be held until the presentation of a document is complete. Some of the questions below can be asked at the population or system levels. Those that are not asked and responded to at the population level can be asked at the system level.

A. Quality of Life (Population) Template: Early Childhood

- **Presentation**

- a. Quality of life result
- b. Why is it important
- c. Funding
- d. Indicators
- e. Story behind the quality of life (population) indicators
- f. What would it take to succeed
- g. What are your strategies to improve performance in the next 3-5 years and why? (Include no-cost/low-cost actions)

- **Questions**

1. You have a measure of readiness at entrance to Kindergarten. Do we really know whether Connecticut's children are ready for school success?
2. How will data from this assessment link to the PSIS data system for instructional and longitudinal tracking purposes?
3. What assurance can you give us that the assessment at entry to Kindergarten will give us a reliable baseline next year and that it will be able to serve as our main indicator of whether anyone is better off? Do we need legislative changes to ensure that there is no confusion about what the expectations and commitment are around this indicator?
4. What does the research tell us about what is the most effective way to ensure the readiness of young children? What can you tell us to help us make decisions about where to make new investments and whether one strategy is likely to be more effective than another?
5. How will we know if the things you propose to do and that you have asked us to fund have made a difference? What will you be able to tell us next year about the effectiveness of the programs we fund to make children ready for school success?
6. Before we spend more money expanding pre-school slots, shouldn't we first require that all existing slots meet quality standards? I thought the research finds that only quality pre-school has a positive effect on readiness. Is the current strategy based on the idea that any pre-school works?
7. You seem to be suggesting that pre-school makes up for the effects of poverty. Do you have evidence for that? Does the type of pre-school experience matter?

8. The proportion of children reading at a mastery or above level seems to have turned the curve in 2006. At the same time, you have changed the assessment instrument and the time when the test is given. How can we know if this is a one time blip, a result of a changing assessment methodology or the start of a real change in scores? Are you going to keep changing the test and its administration or will we be able to compare results from this point forward?
9. Can you tell us based on the pre-school experiences of individual children and groups of children how their preschool experience affects their school readiness and their reading levels? We wanted this information last year. What is preventing this information from being available?
10. How long will it take for your various quality initiatives, like increased teacher qualifications and the quality rating system, to take effect? Should we wait until those are well underway before we fund an expansion of pre-school slots?
11. What is the key story on children's health? We have heard a lot about enrollment in HUSKY. What is the real challenge there? Are we not enrolling all eligible children? Are we not keeping them in the program? Does HUSKY ensure they get the medical care they need? Appropriate number of developmental screenings as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics? Dental care? What can we learn from Head Start about health care?
12. We were under the impression that preventive measures and very early interventions were critical to school readiness, yet most of the money seems to be going to serve children 3 and 4 years old. Why are you not asking for more money to serve children B-2 years of age?
13. I am wondering about the use of mother's education as an indicator. If mother's education is so important to the development and well-being of children, why are we not looking at ways to directly support mothers' efforts to acquire more education?

B. System Template: Early Childhood Service System

- **Presentation**
 - System purpose
 - Contribution to quality of life result
 - Budget info
 - Performance measures
 - Story behind the baselines
 - Partners and their roles
 - What are your strategies to improve performance in the next 3-5 years and why? (Include no-cost/low-cost actions)

C. Strategies to Turn the Curve on School Readiness

Strategy 1. Strengthened Families. Families with young children receive information and support.

Strategy 2. Child Development, Health and Safety. All children have their health, development and safety needs met.

Strategy 3. Early Care and Early Education. Children have the knowledge, skills and behaviors they need for school success at entry to kindergarten.

Strategy 4. System Development. Strengthen service delivery and accountability within and across agencies

A. *Data infrastructure*

B. *Local planning and accountability*

C. *System coordination and efficiency*

D. *System-wide accountability and quality*

- **Questions**

1. Budget: Last year's RBA presentation and the governor's funding request both focused exclusively on increasing pre-school slots. This year you have given us a more comprehensive picture of early childhood, but it seems that again the Governor's proposed budget focuses resources primarily on slots.
 - a. Can we expect the result of Ready by 5 to be achieved primarily through expanding the number of slots? How does the quality of new and existing slots fit into the proposed budget? Are other aspects of quality addressed by the Governor's budget?
 - b. What about the system improvements, things like data sharing, improved measurement, local policy councils, and other infrastructure? How important are they to preparing the way for the expansion of the system? Are there important system improvements that remain to be funded?
 - c. We have been lead to believe that early prevention and intervention are the most cost-effective approaches. The Governor has proposed a very small investment in early childhood development, infant and maternal health and nutrition, developmental screening and similar strategies prior to pre-school. Can you talk about this?
2. You've talked about a model of comprehensive services to young children and their families as being the key to readiness. Don't we already have that model in Head Start? Our state funded programs, including School Readiness and DSS centers cannot provide any data on results. Why shouldn't we just put more money into Head Start?

3. Regardless of whether you think Head Start should be the model, does it make sense for us to have such a fragmented approach to pre-K: Head Start, School Readiness through SDE; and the DSS Centers? Within DSS you have a second type of government-funded care through Care 4 Kids. Each piece seems to have different accreditations rules, different degrees of reporting and accountability, and very different approaches to quality.
4. Isn't there a danger that higher standards, especially for teachers, will actually reduce the supply of child care for working families, especially with programs like Care 4 kids? Might this not have the unintended consequence of forcing more families into poverty? How do we protect against this?
5. Your system diagram shows 9 state agencies and maybe two dozen programs that make a significant contribution to early childhood. Some have suggested there is a need for a broader governance structure (it may be mentioned in the presentation). What are the pros and cons of creating a new office or department of early childhood as opposed to continuing with the current cabinet structure or just consolidating services and programs within a few existing agencies?
6. The governor's budget has requested money for a Bureau of Early Childhood in SDE. Is the bureau meant to coordinate within SDE or across all agencies that contribute to the early childhood results? How does this position relate to the Cabinet and any state-wide governance system?
7. What data and evidence do you have to judge the degree of inter-agency coordination and cooperation within the early childhood system? What will it take to regularly track this information? Do you have plans for how to increase these coordination efforts?
8. Kids most at risk and their families often have multiple needs and are frequently served by multiple agencies. Can you give us any examples of successful cross-agency, cross-program coordination on behalf of serving common clients?
9. In last year's presentation, you talked about the need to uniformly determine quality within all programs receiving state or federal funding. What concrete steps have you taken in that direction in the last year?
10. What efforts have you taken to ensure that all programs receiving state or federal money have measures of child outcomes? How can we tell which programs work with which groups of children?
11. What efforts have you made to ensure that we can track all children in early education settings and follow their progress as they move through the educational system? Do we have a unique identifier for all pre-school

children? Can we link the education data for these children with their health data? Is there a unique health identifier for children from birth now?

12. Is there research from Connecticut or elsewhere to determine what works in terms of readiness and which best practices are most effective in closing the readiness gap?
13. You have talked about the need to strengthen and expand the existing School Readiness Councils. How successful have these councils been in setting policy, coordinating resources, and fostering collaboration across agencies and programs? Why don't we have more information about what they have done and plan to do? What have they done with the money we have already given them?
14. Have we done everything we can within agencies to ensure full coordination across programs? Are there still instances where relevant programs are not fully aligned with the strategies you have set forth?

- **Open Questions from Last Year's Presentation**

I. Health and Hospitals: DPH

Q1: You testified about the use of low-birth weight as a proxy indicator for the health of children from birth to five. Have you been involved in discussions about creating a more meaningful way to assess and report overall health that could be used to track the development of young children each year?

Q2: You testified that your automated systems do not have the capacity to track the health of children from birth to five. We learned this week that SDE is designing a system for tracking all children who receive any form of state-funded care. Are you aware of SDE's effort? Have you discussed the feasibility of adding a module to this proposed system that would capture health information?

Q3. What would be required to make the blue forms useful as a means for determining children's health status?

Q4: What efforts are you making to ensure that the licensing that you do of child care facilities is part of a comprehensive approach to the quality of all center-based early care and education as proposed by the ECE cabinet system goal?

Q5: Should DPH assume a more direct role in providing health service for young children in state-funded centers?

II. Elementary and Secondary Education: SDE

Q1: Can you give us the outcome data you quoted broken out by those who had preschool versus those with no preschool?

Q2: You testified that you are designing a system to track all young children who receive state-funded care. What is the status of this initiative? Have you explored with the other agencies in the ECE Cabinet what components this system should have? For example, have you talked to DPH about including data on the health of the children? Have you talked to DSS about coordinating the tracking with its systems? What legislative changes do you need to implement this system?

Q3: You testified that the assessment of readiness at entry to kindergarten cannot be fully implemented until 2009. Have you considered how, in the interim, you might conduct evaluations in sample districts that could provide useful information to guide our decision-making?

Q4: Please explain how the CMT scores are calculated to determine proficiency and mastery.

Q5: What is the story behind the 4th grade reading scores and the gap in achievement? The scores seem to be going down and the gap does not seem to be narrowing.

Q6: Have you looked behind the data to see which schools are succeeding and which are failing? It would seem that that is very important for learning what works and what doesn't.

Q7: You testified that the planned increase in accreditation standards will raise costs and may cause a reduction in the availability of care in the priority school districts. What plans are you making to deal with this potential effect of the new standards?

Q8: Will you have data on pre-K assessment by program type?

Q9: You testified that the low pay for early care and education teachers is already limiting the supply of qualified teachers and that this problem could get worse when the new standards require teachers to have four-year degrees. What are you doing to address this problem?

Q10: Can you explain the fluctuations in the data on free and reduced price lunches? If there are serious problems with the data, should we use another indicator for children in poverty?

Q7: You testified about the need for greater interaction between ECE centers and the public schools. What can be done to ensure that interaction? Should we legislate that all state-funded centers have MOU's with the public schools?

Q8: What efforts are you making to ensure that the same quality standards apply to all state-funded programs? For example, are you in discussions with DSS to ensure that all

children will meet the same standard of readiness for kindergarten regardless of what program they attend? Do we need legislation to ensure uniform quality?

III. Human Services: DSS

Q1: What efforts are you making to ensure that the same quality standards apply to all state-funded programs? For example, are you in discussions with SDE to ensure that all children will meet the standard of readiness for kindergarten regardless of what program they attend? Do we need legislation to ensure uniform quality?

Q2: You testified that Care4Kids was created to provide child care for working parents rather than quality early care and education for children. Do we need to add a statutory goal to ensure that the children who are funded through this program enter kindergarten healthy and ready for school success?

Q3: You testified repeatedly that two and one-half hours of preschool were not sufficient to make up for the negative effects that the home and community environments can have on some poor children. We understood from SDE that the majority of the children in state-funded centers attend all-day preschool. Please provide data on the hours per day that children attend the programs you fund.

Q4: For your two major programs that serve children from birth to age five, Care4Kinds and the state-funded centers, what can you do collect comprehensive data about the children who participate and their outcomes? What data do you have or can you collect on those who need these services but do not currently receive them?

Q5: We learned this week that SDE is designing a system for tracking all children who receive any form of state-funded care. Are you aware of SDE's effort? Have you discussed with SDE how you can coordinate the data collection efforts for maximum efficiency and for comparability of data? Is this an area that requires legislation?

Q6: You testified that not everyone agreed that pre-school was essential for readiness. Are you saying that money spent on center-based early care and education should be reprogrammed to early intervention?

Q7: Do we know which children are arriving at kindergarten from what settings and how they are doing?

Q8: The idea that "Children who start behind stay behind" disturbs us. There are poor districts with lots of money that do not do well on the 4th grade indicator. Do we have data to back up the idea that those who start behind stay behind? Are there data to show how much time in center-based care or intervention programs is enough to effect remediation?