

Testimony on Bill 7302

Good Morning! My name is Susan Sponheimer and I am the Chief Operating Officer of the Childcare Learning Centers (CLC) in Stamford. I would like to thank the members of the Human Services Committee for providing me with the opportunity to testify before you this morning. I will be speaking to H.B. 7302.

The Childcare Learning Centers provides early care and education for 1100 infants, toddlers and preschoolers on a daily basis. These children are enrolled in either our state-funded DSS program; the School Readiness program, Head Start or the Early Head Start program. The Childcare Learning Centers receives funding from the Connecticut Department of Social Service, the State Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide these programs. None of these funding sources cover the full cost of caring for these children.

The CLC operational budget is dependent upon three streams of funding; state or federal funding, parent fees and the Care4Kids subsidy. The Childcare Learning Center needs all three of these sources of funding in order to balance its budget. Several years ago when the Care4Kids program was closed, CLC found itself with a budget deficit of more than \$200,000. When Care4Kids re-opened CLC was able to once again balance its budget.

State and federal governmental agencies are raising the educational requirements for preschool teaching staff. In order to meet these requirements programs are providing partial reimbursement to staff for college course work and are they are trying to hire more highly educated staff. The problem is these programs do not have the funding to cover

the cost of sending their staff to school or to pay the salaries demanded of teachers with Bachelor Degrees. Childcare providers have not seen an increase in Care4Kids reimbursement in over seven years. If agencies are expected to improve the quality of their teaching staff, they need the funds to do so. Programs need to see an increase in the Care4Kids subsidy reimbursement rate.

I am looking to the members of this committee to change the language of H.B. 7302 so that the Care4Kids program uses the most recent market rate to pay providers. Also, I would like the Care4Kids program to pay the providers at the 75th percentile of this market rate.

Thank you