



**Board of Directors**

Edith B. Cassidy

*Chairwoman*

Frances Newby

*First Vice Chair and Secretary*

Rev. Donald C. Luster

*Second Vice Chair*

Peter Roberge

*Treasurer*

Margie Powell

*Immediate Past Chair*

Stanley Bernard

Nancy D. Busch

Marta Calderón

Gina Dunston-Boone, M.D.

Mary E. Eady

Robert Francis

Linda Goldenberg

Marcy Hardt

Frances Haynes

Jack Hickey-Williams

Margaret Hiller

Alejandra Holway

Hernan Illingworth

Pastor Tyrone P. Jones, IV

Brian J. Langdon

Karen McIntosh

Nadine Nevins

Jane F. Norgren

Janice Park

Alonda T. Powell

Zoraida Reyes

Rev. Brian Schofield-Bodt

Rae A. Sharp

Gina LeVon Simpson

Ludwig Spinelli

Helen B. Wasserman

Scott K. Wilderman

Katherine S. Yacavone

Marilyn Ondrasik

*Executive Director*

Barbara Edinberg

*Assistant Director*

TESTIMONY

of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition

submitted to

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 5, 2009

Committee Chairmen and Committee members, we appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to you today.

The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, BCAC, is a coalition of 80 member organizations. Our members represent a broad range of agencies, including community centers, counseling organizations, early childhood programs, health centers, hospitals, churches and synagogues, and parent and civic organizations. Through a program combining research, community planning, advocacy, community education and mobilization, we work to ensure that children grow up healthy and safe, and receive the education and skills to reach their full potential.

On behalf of our Education and Early Care Task Force, we urge you to support **HB 5426, and extend child care subsidies to unemployed parents under the Care4Kids program.** This bill would extend Care4Kids, the child care subsidy program, to unemployed parents for up to 26 weeks to correspond with their unemployment benefits. Currently, Care4Kids is only extended for four weeks of unemployment.

There is no question that the economy is in turmoil. In December 2008, Bridgeport's unemployment rate was 10.1%, a jump of over 40% from December 2007. Each month, the unemployment rate keeps rising. Immediate relief is not in sight.

Parents who are unemployed are desperately looking for new jobs, but the jobs are simply not available. In the current economic climate, four weeks, the current amount of time unemployed parents can keep their Care4Kids subsidy, is simply not enough time for parents to get a new job.

An extension of child care benefits is especially important in these turbulent economic times. Parents are worried about keeping a roof over their families' heads and food on the table. The stress can be overwhelming. Early education programs provide a stable environment for children during these times of family crisis. If parents lose their Care4Kids before they are able to find a new job, most will have to take their child out of his or her early care program. Without an income or subsidy, parents will not be able to afford the full cost of care.

In addition, extending child care benefits allow children to continue receiving a quality early care education. Research clearly demonstrates that quality child care is critically important to provide children with the strong start they need.

The proposed federal stimulus package includes dollars for the Child Development Block Grant that could be applied to extending Care4Kids to unemployed parents. We urge you to support this important proposal to extend child care to the unemployed under Care4Kids.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.