



Senator Paul R. Doyle, Co-Chair
Representative Toni E. Walker, Co-Chair
Members of the Human Services Committee

March 11, 2010

**Testimony Regarding Senate Bill No. 391, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE
SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM**

Good Afternoon, My name is Tiffany Murasso, I am the Director of Early Childhood Programs for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Catholic Charities provides Early Care and Education services in 9 licensed centers serving approximately 450 children each year. Our programs serve the neediest children in the state, and provide critical support for working families.

I am here today to advocate for bill 391 which ensures the Care 4 Kids Program processes applications and makes eligibility determinations within 30 days of receipt. Currently programs and families wait up to three months for this verification. The families we serve can not afford to pay the full cost of childcare while waiting to find out if they are eligible for Care 4 Kids. Working families in our state deserve efficient processing of applications. Too many worry how they will pay their child care provider and many are forced to consider quitting their jobs and collecting state assistance instead.

As a School Readiness funded program we depend on Care 4 Kids funds to help cover our cost of care and keep our programs operating. We operate on an extremely tight budget and waiting several months before receiving payment for services provided puts tremendous strain on our programs. Often times, small changes in revenues can determine a center's survival.

I would like to thank legislators for working to keep the Care 4 Kids program open this fiscal year as without Care 4 Kids funding our program could not offer the quality services our most fragile children need to be successful. It is impossible to provide this level of quality without adequate funding. It is therefore imperative that the Care 4 Kids program remain open in FY11 for the states neediest children and families.

In the context of the economic crisis in our state it is understandable that tough decisions must be made, however the Early Childhood system is already marginally funded and fragile. Research shows that investment in early childhood impacts how children succeed in school and develop into productive members of society. Further cuts in funding will have a devastating impact on Connecticut children and families and cost our state more in the long run.

Thank you for your time and support.

