



Connecticut Association for Human Services  
110 Bartholomew Avenue - Suite 4030  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
[www.cahs.org](http://www.cahs.org)

Luis Caban, President  
James P. Horan, Executive Director

## Labor and Public Employees Committee

Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Early Care and Education Policy Analyst  
Connecticut Association for Human Services

RE: SB 352, An Act Creating a Process for Family Childcare Providers to Collectively Bargain with the State

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Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on SB 352, An Act Creating a Process for Family Childcare Providers to Collectively Bargain with the State.

As of December 2011, the Care4kids program had over 10,000 children in family based settings and kith and kin settings. To be eligible to receive Care4kids, the state's childcare subsidy program, a family must make below 50% of the state median income. For a family of three-mom and two kids- the working mom must make less than \$3,574 monthly.

It is imperative that these low income families receive quality childcare for their children. Studies have shown that a quality childcare experience can significantly reduce the achievement gap providing a child with the skills they need to achieve in school and in the world. Unfortunately, as it stands today, children receiving childcare through the Care4kids program have limited funds to afford quality childcare. In 2009, CT subsidy rates were only high enough to pay for the cheapest 14% of infant and toddler slots in licensed family childcare homes.

Family Childcare Provides are some of the lowest paid workers in Connecticut, performing one of our states most important roles. As a state, we have made a commitment to increasing quality amongst childcare programs and yet we continue to pay family based childcare providers some of the lowest wages. How do we expect family childcare providers to pay for professional development when many providers qualify for the states subsidy program themselves? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 20 of the 821 occupations reported have lower wages than childcare workers. CT is one of three states that have not raised childcare subsidy rates since 2002, along with Idaho and Kansas.

It is important for Family Childcare Providers to have a voice in subsidy decisions and the opportunity to receive workforce development opportunities. Not only is this imperative for the children and families receiving childcare but also for the childcare workforce, predominantly women, who need and deserve to make a living wage.