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February 14, 2014

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Bonnie Forlastro, I am a resident of Danbury and I am writing in support of the Governor's Budget for early care and education, specifically the line items related to the Care 4 Kids program.

I have been a licensed family child care provider in Danbury for 18 years. Over this period of time, I have watched many children grow and become successful in school and in life. I have also witnessed the changes in the American family and the stresses they endure to make ends meet for their families. Times have changed. Parents have less face time with their children and much of that time is spent cooking, doing laundry or shuffling the little ones off to a bath and bed.

As a home-based child care provider, I cherish the fact that my services provide the nurturing "homey" experience that is so rare for children these days. I also take very seriously the need to get these babies ready for public school. They leave my care secure in their ability to play with other children, knowing how to hold a book, and able to take direction from an adult.

For years, our work as family child care providers was completely ignored. I thank CSEA/SEIU for helping to shine a light on the important work we do with all children, but especially those coming to us from Care 4 Kids. The Governor has raised the Care 4 Kids reimbursement rates for the first time in twelve years! That's an awfully long time to wait for a pay increase. This will help the parents whose children I care for as much as it does me. Please find a way to make sure that the increase in Care 4 Kids rates stays in the budget. Thank you.

Barbara Forlastro  
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